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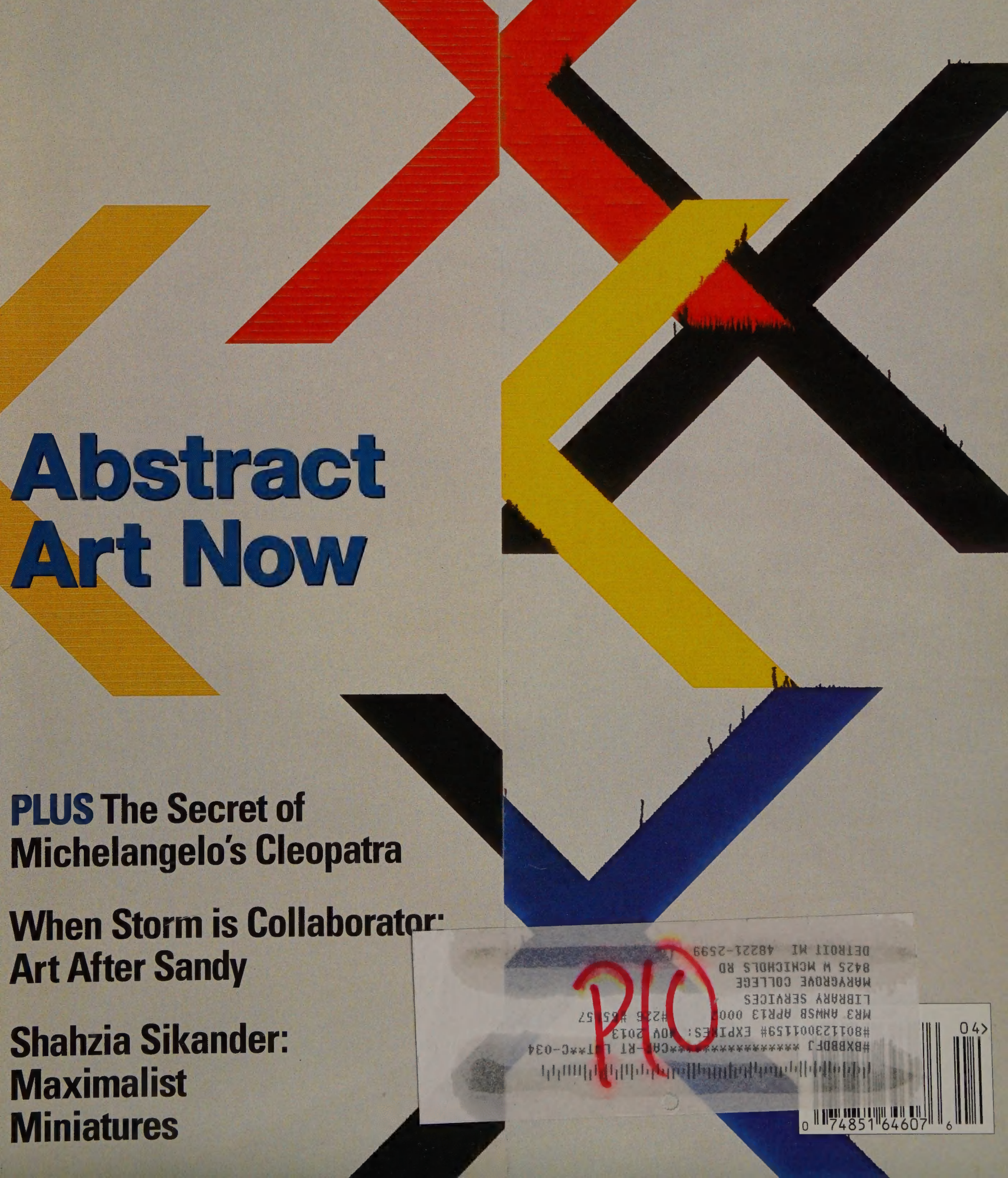

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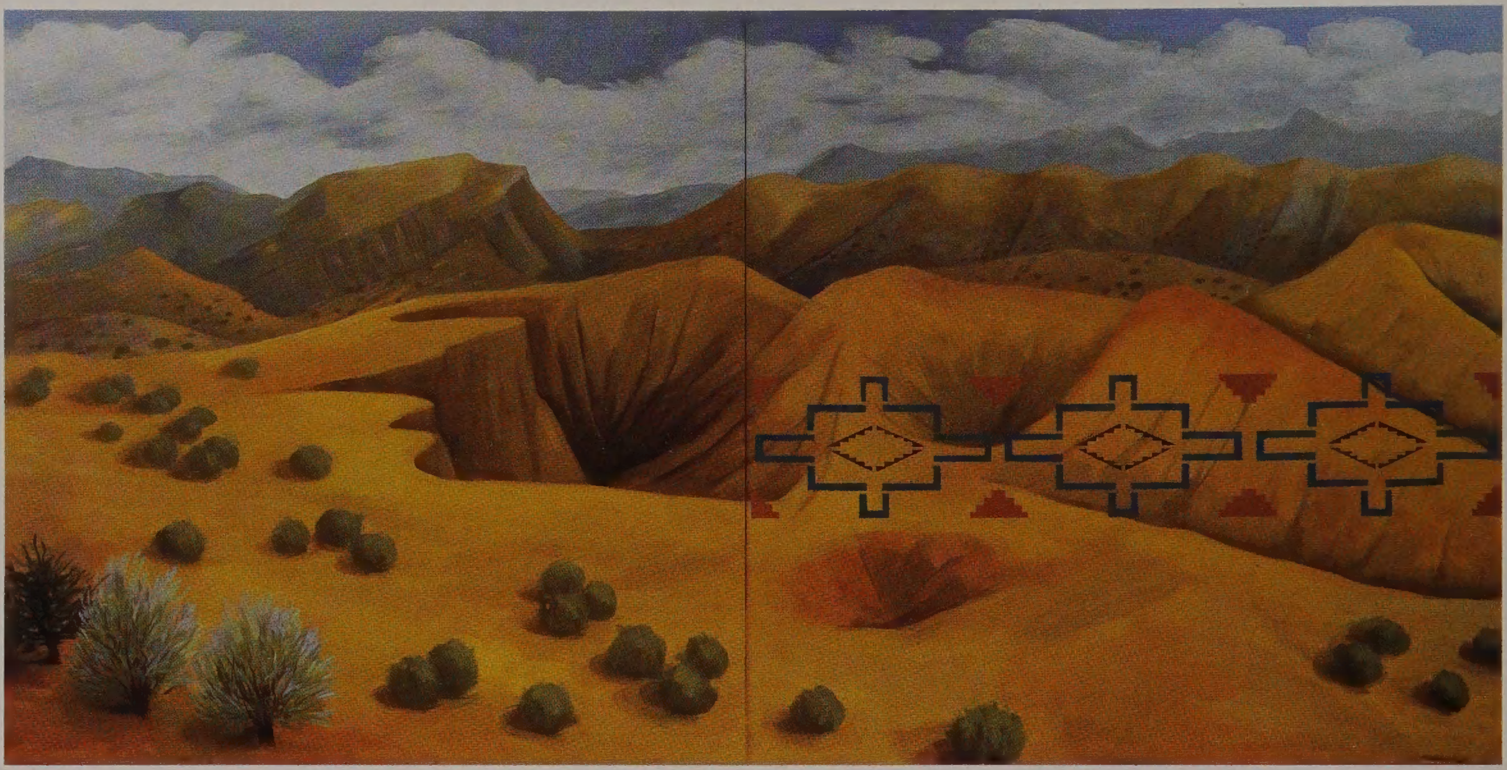

"New Mexico Desert," 2012, oil on wood panel, diptych, 40" x 80"


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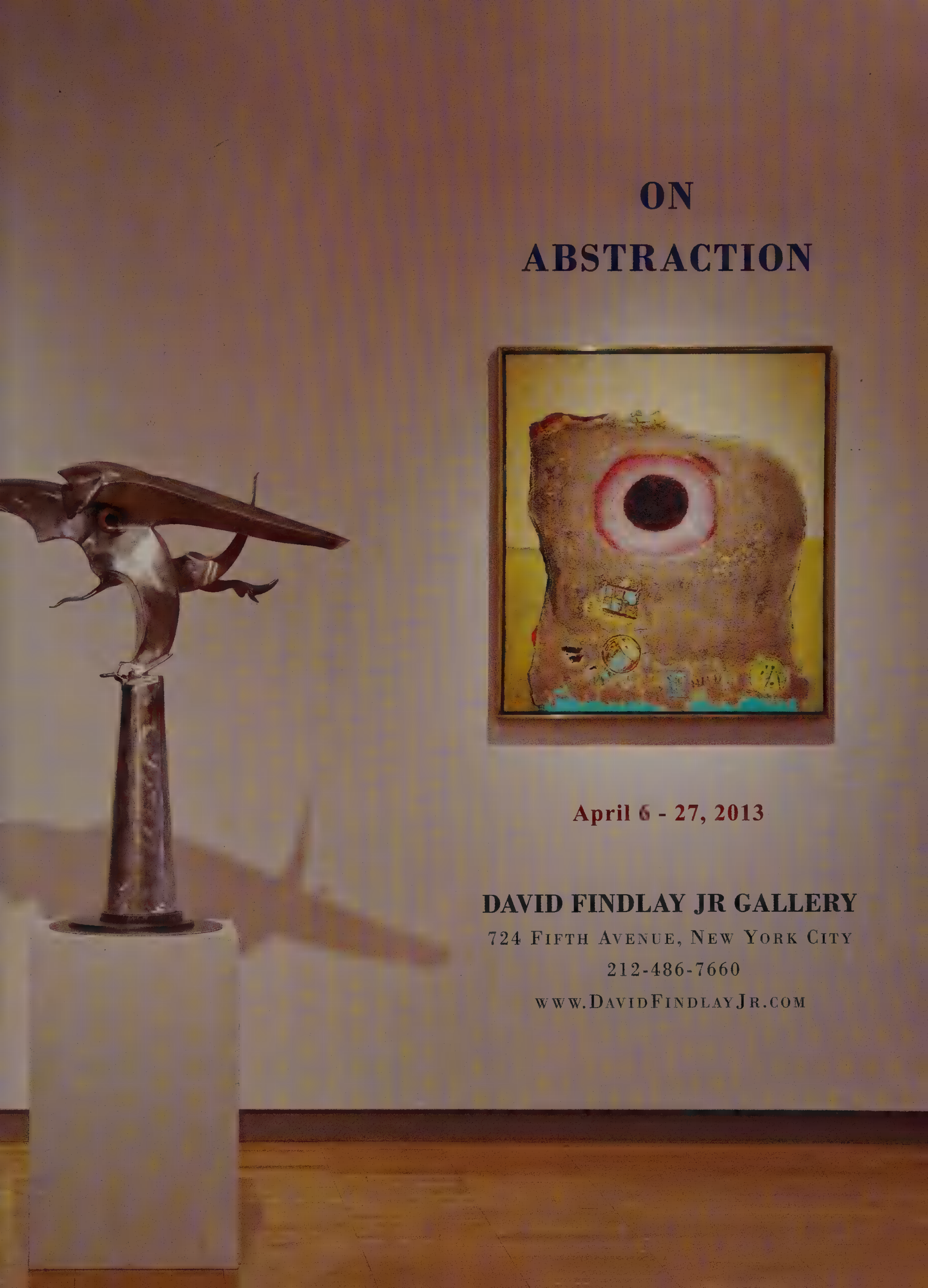
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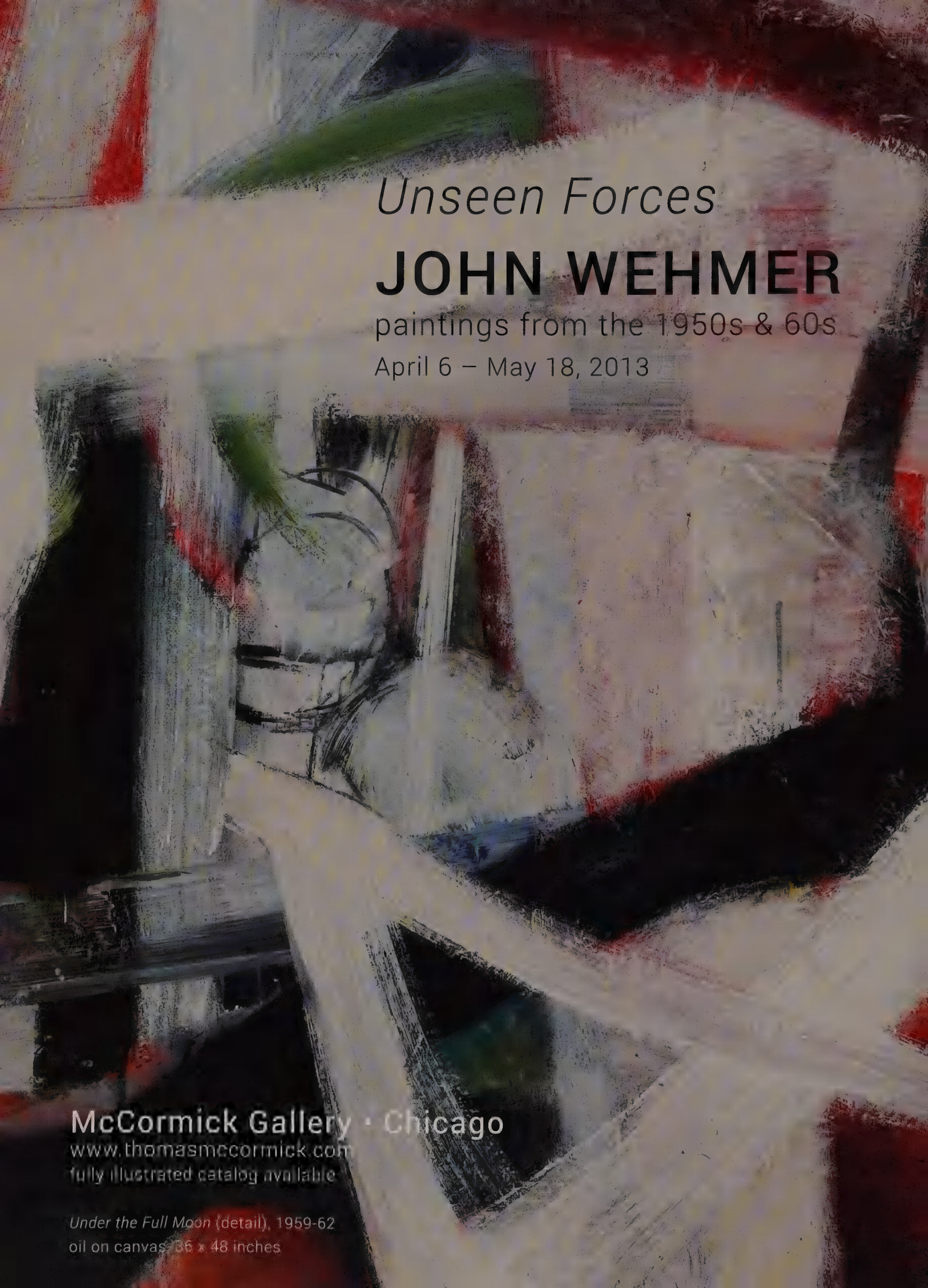
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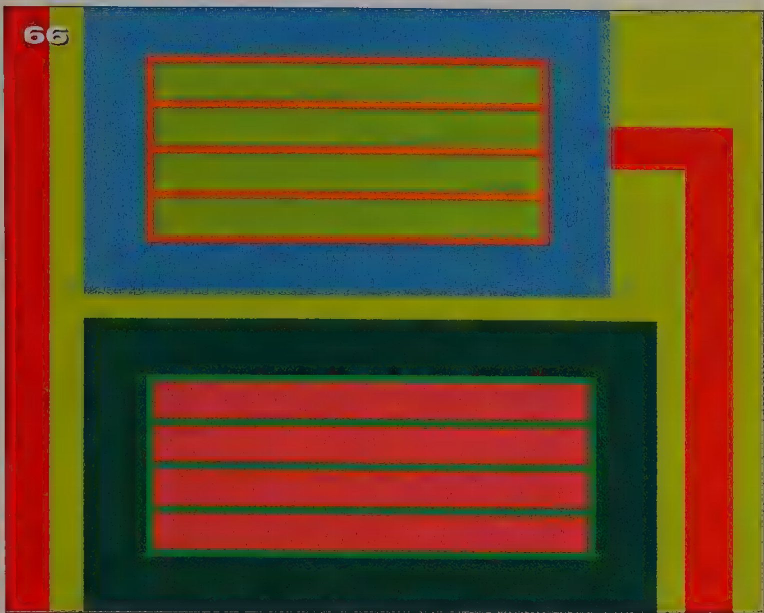

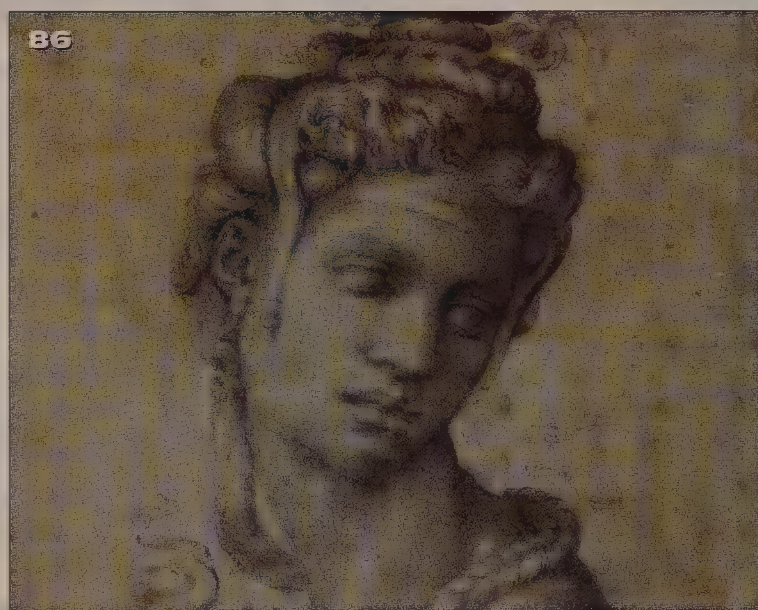

Departments

COVER *Wade Guyton,* Untitled *(detail), 2010, Epson UltraChrome ink-jet on linen, 84" x 69". Lamay Photo/Courtesy the artist and Petzel, New York. See story, page 66*


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Jane Crawford, Jennifer McDermott, Erica Necarsulmer

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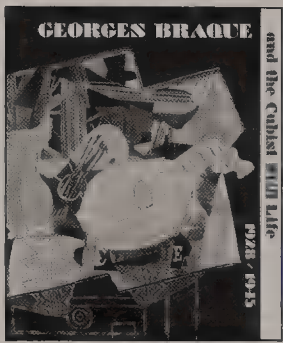

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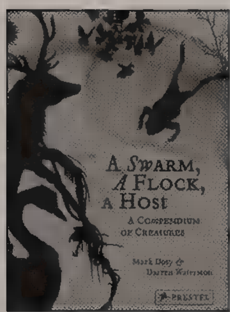

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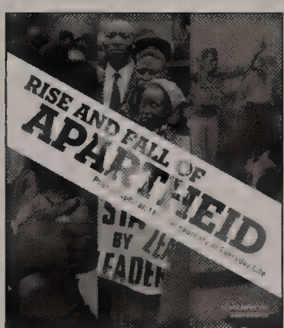

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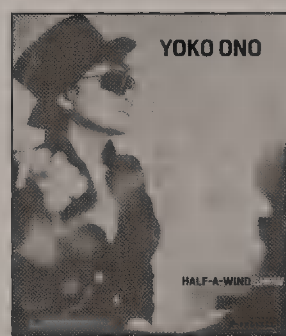

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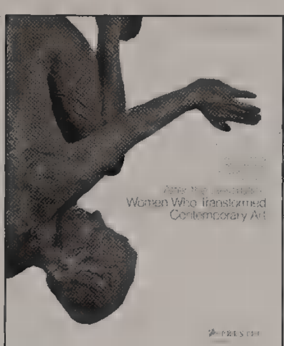

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Hold the Pickle?

"People stood in front of the gallery with signs reading 'Don't Burger Up Our Gallery,'" says **Shiralee Hudson Hill**, an interpretive planner at the Art Gallery of Ontario in Toronto. Hill is talking about the response, in 1967, to news that the AGO had purchased *Floor Burger* (1962), **Claes Oldenburg**'s deadpan, outsize sculpture of a hamburger. "About 50 art students also created a nine-foot-high ketchup bottle and paraded it in front of the building," she adds.

Today, "the burger" is one of the museum's most popular works. And the painted canvas sculpture, which recently underwent a major restoration, will be among the works included in the show "Claes Oldenburg: The Street and the Store," opening at the Museum of Modern Art in New York on April 14.

Claes Oldenburg's *Floor Burger*, 1962, before restoration.

"*Floor Burger*'s form is very well-constructed," says AGO conservator **Sherry Phillips**. "Oldenburg's first wife, Patty, sewed all the pieces together." Last October, Phillips and her team started consolidating the layers of flaking paint, using adhesive to reaffix it to the work's surface. Then, they needed to address the inside of the sculpture. "The burger's stuffing—chunks of foam and, surprisingly, cardboard ice-cream cartons—has fared well, but the pieces shifted, leaving the sculpture with an uneven appearance," Phillips explains. "We used archival images of the piece for comparison, and gently pushed and pulled the stuffing to create a better-defined 'burger' shape."

Oldenburg admits, "I was more concerned with the effect of the piece as I was making it rather than its future conservation," adding, "We were careful to use high-grade materials, but still the result is a lot of people work in art restoration now because works from that period are starting to need attention." The 84-year-old artist explains why he decided to use ice-cream cartons as stuffing. "I started with the foam, but found it was weighing the sculpture down," he says, "so we used the empty boxes to make it lighter."

Sherry Phillips of the Art Gallery of Ontario restoring one of *Floor Burger*'s painted canvas buns.

Many urban legends about *Floor Burger* circulate at the AGO, including early reports of visitors jumping on it, expecting it to be cushiony like a beanbag chair. There are also tales about the pickle that sits on the burger's bun. According to one story, the pickle disappeared in the early '70s, and Oldenburg flew to Toronto with a replacement, claiming it was a travel pillow to get it through customs. "The pickle is made differently from the rest of *Floor Burger*," says Phillips. "There's a different type of paint, so it could have been a later addition or substitution."

Oldenburg laughs upon hearing this. "That sounds like it could be true," he says. "But like a lot of things, I can't remember for sure. I do recall that the sides of the pickle are covered with a shinier paint than the rest, so it looks wet like a pickle. But that is still a very convincing story. I'll have to look in my diaries." —*Bill Clarke*

They've Got Game

"My painting brings the sky inside," muses **José Parlá**, one of three artists tapped to create site-specific work for the Barclays Center. His cerulean mural was inspired by the Brooklyn arena's semitransparency, its swooping bands of pre-rusted steel, and its mirrored glass panels, which he says reflect the clouds. Called *Diary of Brooklyn* (2012), it is situated high on a 70-foot expanse of wall visible from the street.

Along with contributions by **Mickalene Thomas** and the **OpenEndedGroup** art collective, Parlá's piece kicked off the arena's recently launched contemporary-art initiative, showcasing a variety of works by Brooklyn producers. "We want the Barclays to operate as a place for a broad range of cultural activities that reflect the borough's vibrancy—not just basketball," says **David Berliner**, executive vice president of Forest City Ratner Companies, the developers of the Brooklyn Nets' home court.

To that end, Berliner coordinated the commissions with Brooklyn Museum of Art director **Arnold Lehman** and curator **Eugenie Tsai**, art historian **Sarah Elizabeth Lewis**, and Nets part-owner **Jay-Z**. Thomas's monumental vinyl mural, installed like wallpaper in a large concessions area on the second floor, is a colorful photocollage of Brooklyn vignettes.

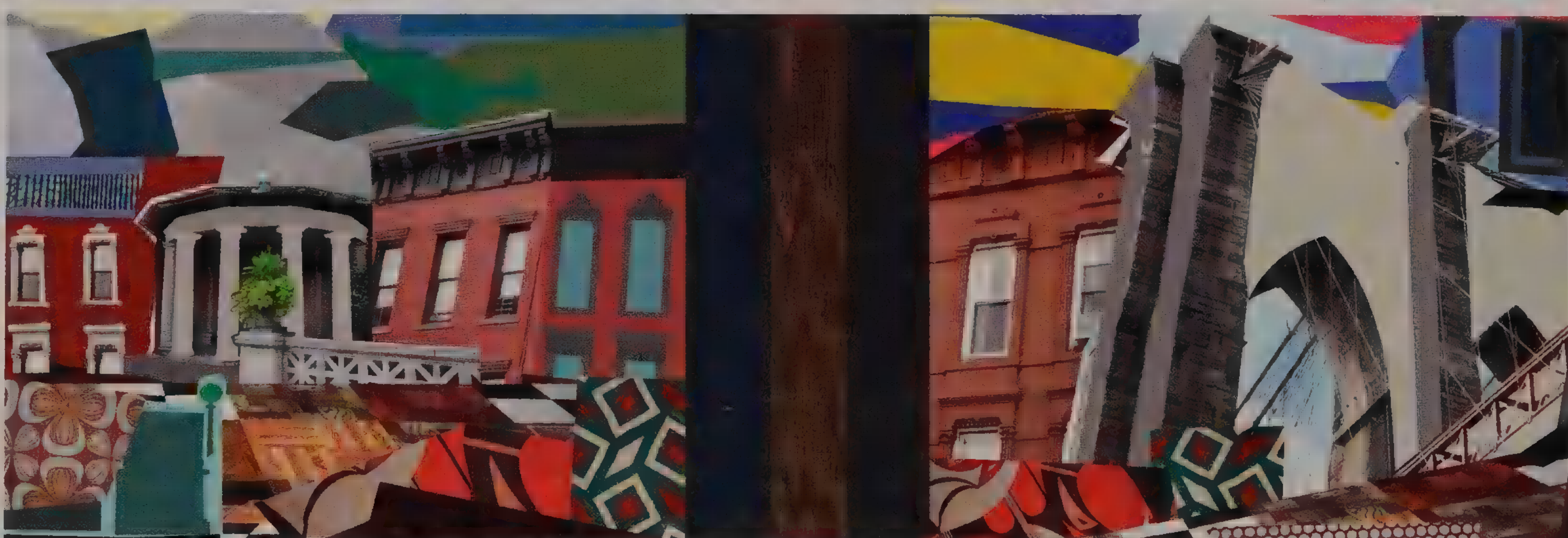
José Parlá working on his mural *Diary of Brooklyn* at the Barclays Center (above). A still from OpenEndedGroup's animation *After Ghostcatching*, 2010 (below).

Its vibrant views of local architectural landmarks, from the Brooklyn Bridge to Grand Army Plaza's Memorial Arch, collide and mingle in something like a remixed history painting.

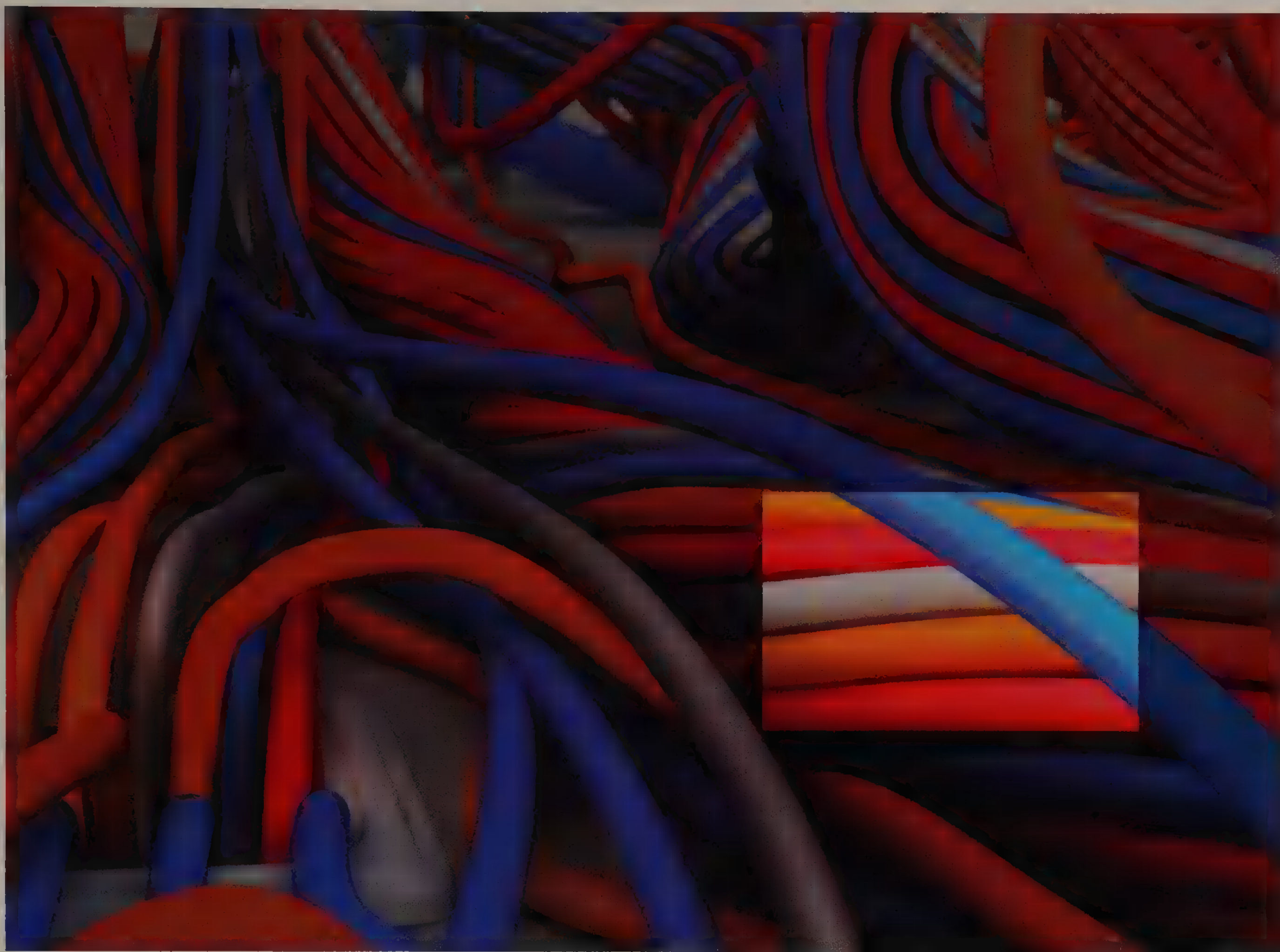
Occupying a more public space, the OpenEndedGroup has fitted the enormous Barclays Center Oculus—a 360-degree LED marquee outside the main entrance—with their haunting three-dimensional animation *After Ghostcatching* (2010), in which figures made of smoke and fire dance to **Bill T. Jones**'s choreography. The group is already working on its next commission, a digital homage to the borough's rich stoop culture derived from the movements of children playing street games.

Parlá's painting, meanwhile, draws on the vocabulary of hip-hop and reggae as well as the epic history of Brooklyn wall writing detailed in **James Agee**'s 1939 book *Brooklyn Is*. Scratched into the work's surface are layers of swirling, lyrical strokes that almost evoke text. "The words are basically illegible," Parlá says, "so the stories embedded there become the viewers' own. It's my own private diary—and also a sort of diary of Brooklyn."

—***Emily Nathan***



A rendering of Mickalene Thomas's photocollage mural for the arena (detail).



Instant Gratification

"Polaroid looks different than other photography, much in the way of Kodachrome, with its own color palette and characteristics," says **Christopher Bonanos**. "There was no grain in the larger 8x10 or 20x24 formats, for example." Bonanos, an editor at *New York* magazine, has written a history of the 20th century's high-tech-quickie-photograph-turned-pop-culture-obsession, in *Instant: The Story of Polaroid* (Princeton Architectural Press). Drawing on interviews and previously hidden archives—which went public in 2010, two years after Polaroid stopped producing film—he tells us how Polaroid cameras have been used as fine-art instruments, at nearly every model and stage.

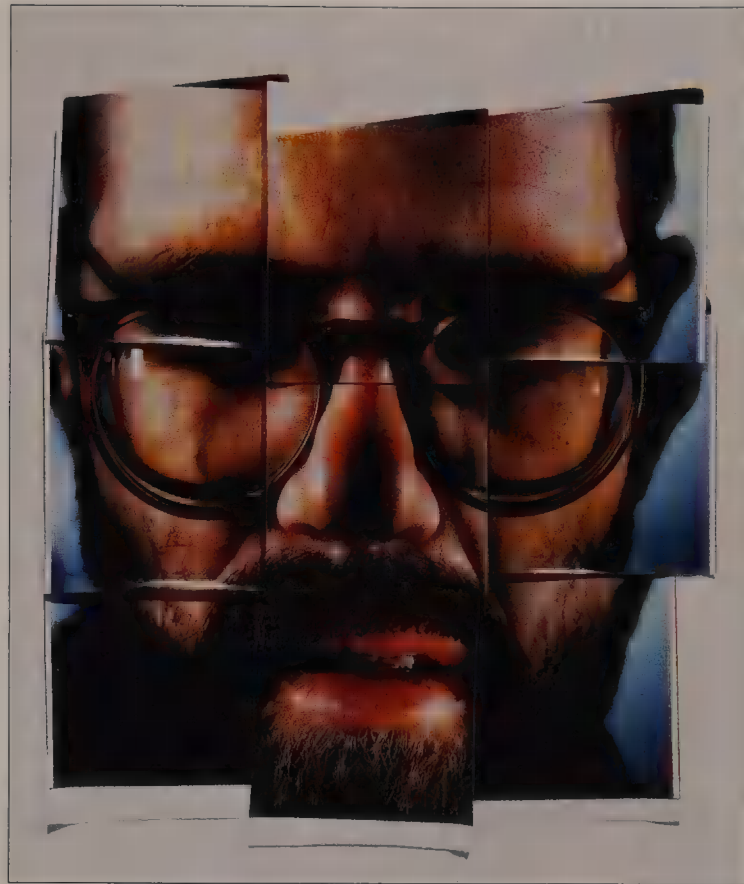
The author's fascination with his subject began when, as a teenager in the 1980s, he bought one of the early, five-pound models from the '50s. When that camera was made, the company's visionary founder, **Edwin Land**, had already hit it off with **Ansel Adams**, and Land enlisted the photographer as a consultant in 1949 for $100 a month. Adams often shot on Type 55 film, which produced both a print and a reusable large-format negative. He captured one of his favorite images with a Polaroid: *El Capitan, Sunrise, Winter, Yosemite National Park, California, 1968*.

Adams talked up the brand to his art-world connections, and many other luminaries started experimenting with the technology. **Bert Stern**, for one, made Polaroid portraits of **Louis Armstrong** and **Salvador Dalí**. "The intimacy of the technology—point, shoot, and print—allowed experimentation, and that was also part of its draw," Bonanos says.

Chuck Close used the gargantuan 20x24 model to take incredibly sharp pictures of sections of his own face—every pore visible—which he then stitched together to create one big portrait in 1979. (He later photographed **Barack Obama** with a

Patrick Nagatani, *d'Alamogordo Blues*, 1986 (left). David Levinthal, from the series "American Beauties," 1989–90 (below left). Lucas Samaras, *Photo-Transformation, June 13, 1974* (below right).

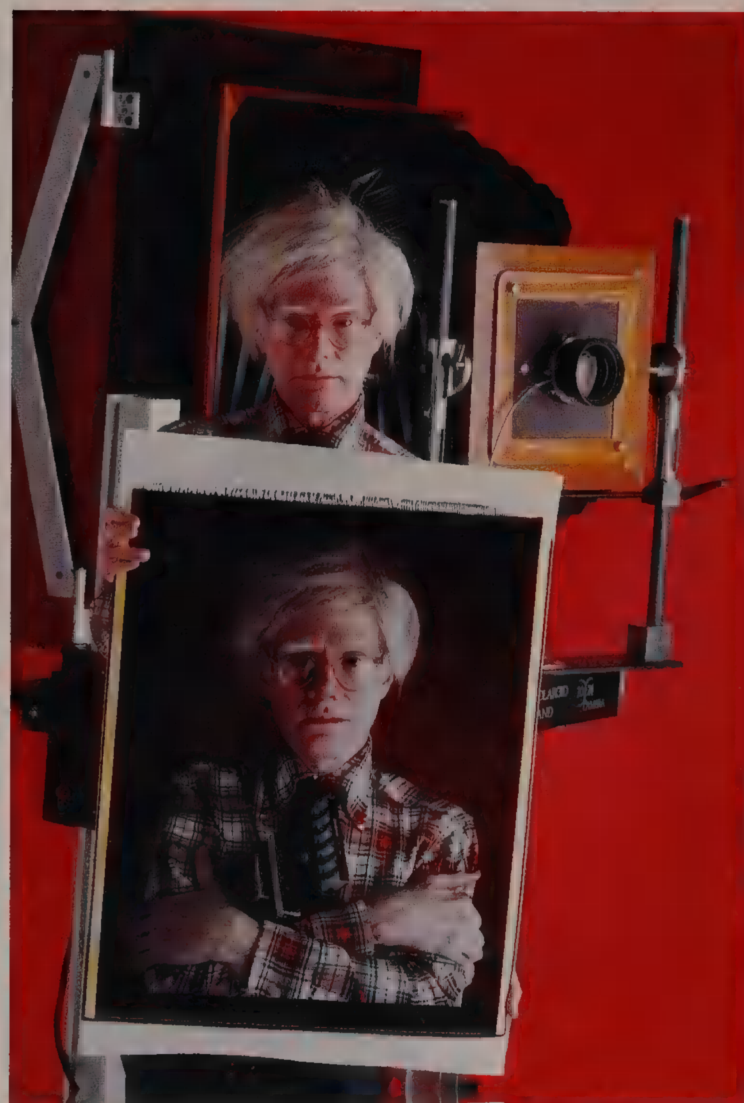
CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: COURTESY THE WESTLICHT COLLECTION, VIENNA; ELLEN LABENSKI/©LUCAS SAMARAS/COURTESY THE PACE GALLERY, NEW YORK, LONDON, BEIJING; ©DAVID LEVINTHAL



20x24.) **Andy Warhol** also dallied with the phone-booth-size camera, but far more often he wielded a handheld plastic Big Shot, bringing it to parties, art openings, and museums, accumulating the photos that informed his silkscreens. **David Hockney** played with perspective in his photocollages, such as *Sun on the Pool Los Angeles April 13th 1982*, in a way that would have been nearly impossible had his Polaroid not freed him up to instantly reshoot any crooked edges.

In 1972, Polaroid introduced its most familiar format, the SX-70, with the white tab at the bottom of the frame. **Walker Evans** bought one, thinking it would be a fun toy, but then embraced it as a serious medium for shooting Americana. And **Lucas Samaras** had used Polaroid film for years before he famously began pressing on the surface of his SX-70 prints—the gelatin-based emulsion stayed wet under the Mylar cover for hours—to create distorted and disturbing images. "This kind of manipulation," says Bonanos, "wasn't seen again until the advent of Photoshop."

Indeed, Polaroid's innovation of the instant picture wasn't only groundbreaking in its own time; it laid the foundation for how we relate to photography today. Bonanos details how, in a 1970 speech outside Boston, Land predicted that one day we would use a camera like a "telephone." It would become, the inventor said, "something that was always with you." —***Bree Sposato***



William Wegman, *Fay and Andrea*, 1987 (above left). Chuck Close, *Self-Portrait/Composite/Nine Parts*, 1979 (above right). A double portrait of Andy Warhol by Bill Ray, 1980 (right).

ARTTALK

Flipping Pages

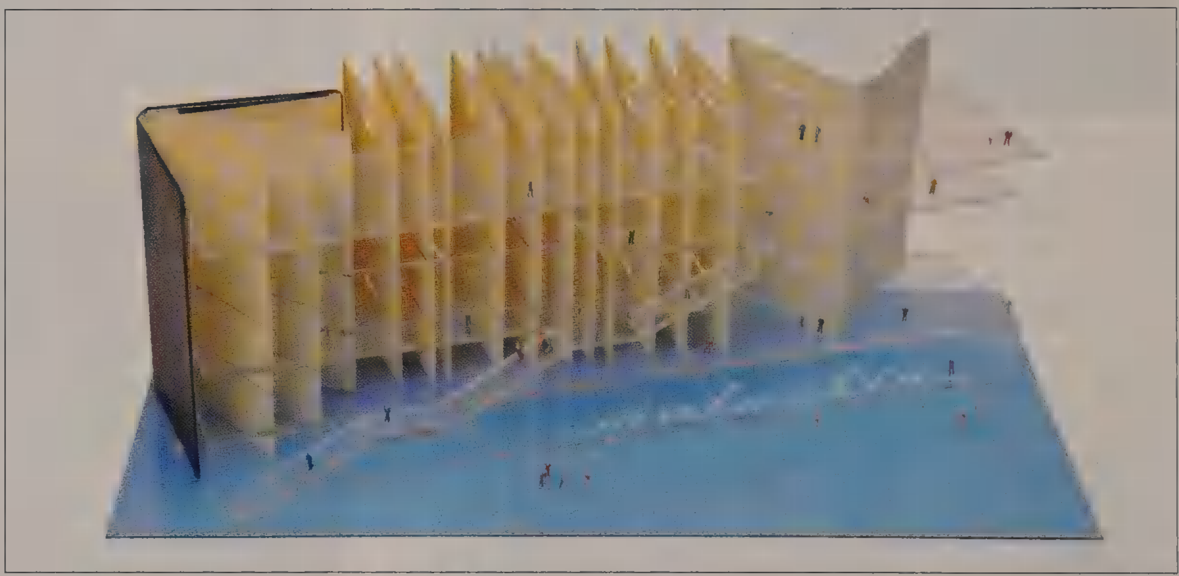
By coating warped pages in colorful resins and fanning them out in the shape of a pumpkin, American artist **Cristina Lei Rodriguez** transformed a standard Moleskine notebook into a whimsical, rainbow-hued sculpture. The piece is her contribution to *The Detour Book*, published by the Milan-based notebook company, which compiles images of journals-turned-artworks by dozens of international artists, architects, musicians, writers, and designers. Another playful submission comes from Turkish architecture firm **Atelye70**, who constructed a sleek, three-dimensional, **Renzo Piano**–inspired model of a "Moleskine Museum"—it even includes small-scale museum patrons. **Tom Sachs** took a more traditional approach to the project, fashioning a hefty chained-and-padlocked diary titled *Tom Sachs Secrets 2007*.

While many participants added on to the original structure of the notebook, others cut, burned, or otherwise attempted to destroy theirs. Italian artist **Loredana Longo** rigged a makeshift bomb to her Moleskine, charring the photos and notes inside, and Singapore-based artist **Ana Prvacki** photographed herself lighting her pages on fire as part of a performance piece.

Of course, the blank sheets of a notebook are meant to be written on—the contributors to this project simply took their markings a step further. As **Raffaella Guidobono**, a longtime creative consultant for Moleskine, says in *The Detour Book*, "Each time you work with paper, you are automatically upcycling it."

—*Stephanie Strasnick*

Cristina Lei Rodriguez's multicolor sculpture.



A "Moleskine Museum" model designed by Atelye70.

Textile designer Eiji Miyamoto's Moleskine is filled with sketches and fabric swatches.

Fashion designer Christian Lacroix created colorful collages in his notebook.

COURTESY MOLESKINE (4)

Making Art History

What do "Primary Structures" in 1966, the "Times Square Show" in 1980, "Freeze" in 1988, and "Cities on the Move" in 1997 have in common? These are all exhibitions that have changed the course of contemporary art, at least according to **Bruce Altshuler**, the author of *Biennials and Beyond: Exhibitions that Made Art History: 1962–2002* (Phaidon). A follow-up to his 2008 book *Salon to Biennial: Exhibitions that Made Art History: 1863–1959*, the new volume brings together a range of curatorial projects—all featuring contemporary art and all group shows.

"Given that it is almost impossible to choose 25 exhibitions in 40 years, you need some restraints," says Altshuler, who also directs New York University's museum-studies program. He's fascinated with the way that exhibitions can either concretize a significant art movement, such as "New Realists" at Sidney Janis Gallery in 1962—which first brought recognition to Pop art—or offer an innovation in curatorial practice, as with Documenta 11, which held discussion platforms in a string of cities before culminating in a presentation of art objects in Kassel, Germany, in 2002.

One advantage of *Biennials and Beyond* over the first volume is the abundance of documentary and source materials: installation photographs, contemporaneous reviews, newspaper accounts, and catalogue essays. Some exhibitions are thought of entirely differently today than when they first were presented, like the 1993 Whitney Biennial, now known as the "Political Biennial" because it introduced so many socially engaged artists. One show, Moscow's "Bulldozer Exhibition" in 1974, so called because it was plowed down by authorities, was hard to document at all. In every case, it was a challenge for Altshuler to pare down the information.

Paul Thek's installation *Visual Therapy–dedicated to Archbishop Raymond Hunthausen* in the 1986 Chambres d'Amis exhibition in Ghent.

In the period of history covered by the earlier book, most of the significant exhibitions were curated by the artists themselves, starting with the Salon des Refusés in Paris in 1863. But since 1962, with expanding museum interest in contemporary art and the professionalization of curatorial practice, major exhibitions have been supported and produced by institutions. The hero of this latter story is **Harald Szeemann**, who practically invented the role of the independent curator, most notably with his show, "Live in Your Head: When Attitudes Become Form," held in Bern, Switzerland, in 1969. The book also makes it quite apparent that during the years covered the art world expanded to include movements from Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

Though he did not list any art fairs among his array of exhibitions, Altshuler notes that the fairs now have taken up several of the structural innovations of biennials: panels, commissioned projects, citywide venues, far-flung locales. "People were suffering from biennial fatigue, having to fly from one to the other to keep up—it was complete burnout," he says. "Now, that feeling is directed at art fairs."

—*Barbara Pollack*

Manuel Mendive's *Life* was performed at the Second Havana Biennial in 1986.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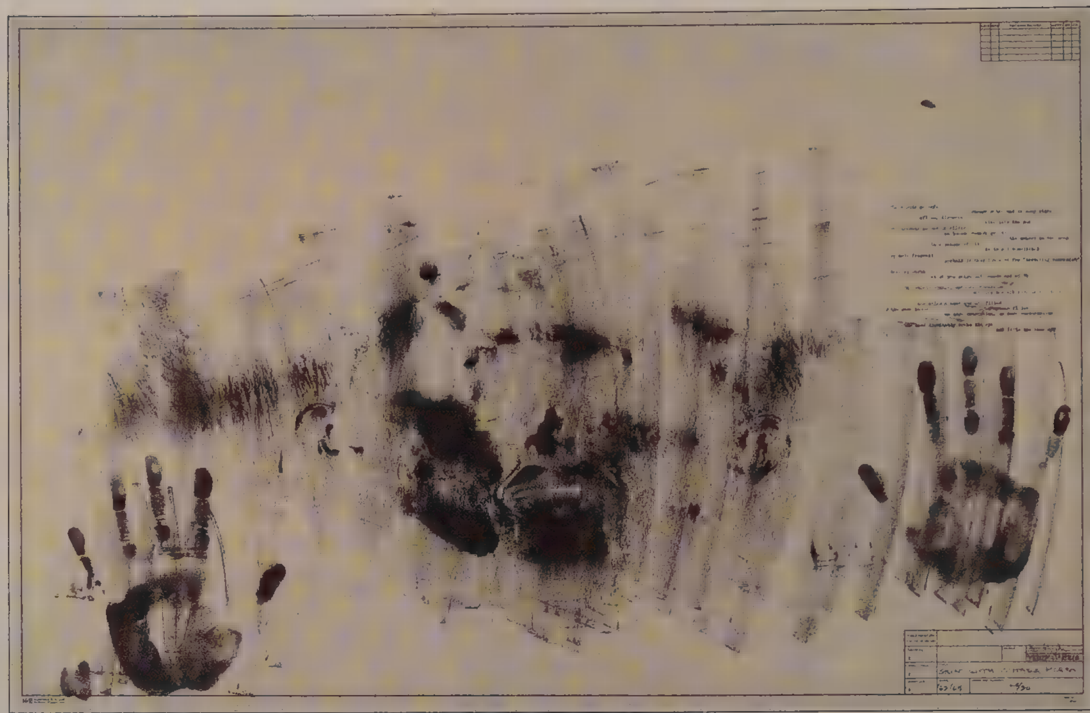
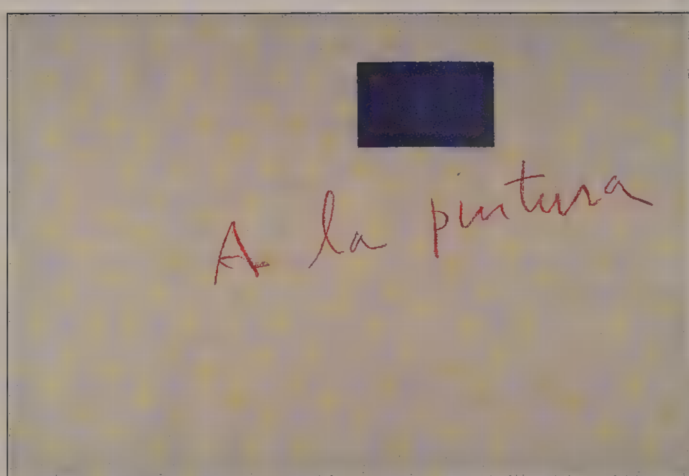
Words with Friends

"I have abandoned sculpture engraving and painting to dedicate myself entirely to song," a 55-year-old **Pablo Picasso** told his friend, the poet **Jaime Sabartés**, in 1936. While the artist never followed through on his claim, he did spend part of the '30s producing short poems influenced by the likes of **André Breton**, **Max Jacob**, and **Guillaume Apollinaire**.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: ***Skin with O'Hara Poem*, 1963–65, a lithograph by Jasper Johns with poetry by Frank O'Hara. Plate two of Ellsworth Kelly's 1992 portfolio "The Mallarmé Suite." Frontispiece from Robert Motherwell's 1972 portfolio "A la pintura," inspired by the poems of Rafael Alberti.**



Across the Atlantic, 14 years later, a young **John Ashbery** (who would later become executive editor of this magazine) threw a cocktail party at which **Larry Rivers** and **Frank O'Hara** met for the first time. "I thought he was crazy and he thought I was even crazier," O'Hara infamously said of Rivers. Their meeting would lead to a rich output of lithographs, poems, and plays.

Famed pairings such as these and the resulting images and poems serve as a jumping-off point for the exhibition "The Artist and the Poet," through June 2 at the Art Institute of Chicago, centering on 20th-century collaborations between the two realms. Inspired by Picasso's relationships with poets, the show is part of the museum-wide celebration "Picasso and Chicago" on the 100th anniversary of the artist's first show in the United States, which took place at the institute.

Curators **Emily Ziemba** and **Mark Pascale** chose many works that had received little attention previously: **Ellsworth Kelly**'s 1992 portfolio "The Mallarmé Suite" has not been shown since the artist gave it to the museum. **Tatyana Grosman**'s New York workshop Universal Limited Art Editions (ULAE) thrived in postwar America, producing collaborations such as Rivers and O'Hara's poem-lithograph *Stones* (1957–59) and *Skin with O'Hara Poem* (1963–65), a print by **Jasper Johns**. That collection also includes works by **Robert Rauschenberg** and **Lee Bontecou**, and much of it has not been shown in more than two decades.

Picasso's impact on verse runs so deep that Ziemba discovered many angles for the exhibition without really looking for them. **Robert Motherwell**, for instance, found inspiration for his portfolio "A la pintura" in the poems of Spanish poet-artist **Rafael Alberti**, who was friends with Picasso. In one of the works in the series, Motherwell interprets the translated verses of Alberti's "Red": "I descend to the rose of the rose of Picasso."

Along with its historical significance to Picasso's career, Chicago also holds special providence for poets. Only a year before Picasso's debut, Harriet Monroe founded *Poetry* magazine there. (The exhibition includes several Chicagoans, most notably contemporary artist **Tony Fitzpatrick**, from whom the institute recently received a large gift of prints.) And while poetry has some obvious links to Chicago, Ziemba notes that other findings came about by accident. "I can't claim to have known this when I decided to use **Hockney**'s *The Blue Guitar*, but **Wallace Stevens**'s first mature poems were published in *Poetry* in 1914," Ziemba says. "It's funny that you don't set out to make these kinds of connections but it all comes together anyway."

—***Ali Pechman***

TOP AND BOTTOM LEFT: U.L.A.E. COLLECTION ACQUIRED THROUGH A CHALLENGE GRANT OF MR. AND MRS. THOMAS DITTMER, RESTRICTED GIFT OF SUPPORTERS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF PRINTS AND DRAWINGS,

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Epic FAILE

Until recently, **Patrick McNeil** and **Patrick Miller**'s experience with ballet consisted of the latter's childhood viewing of *The Nutcracker*. Then the New York City Ballet came calling. The company selected the Brooklyn-based duo, better known as FAILE (an anagram of "a life"), to inaugurate the New York City Ballet Art Series, an initiative that will annually commission contemporary artists to create exhibitions for the ballet's Lincoln Center home.

"We hope to bring new audiences through our doors who are interested in this type of creative collaboration," says the ballet's executive director **Kathy Brown**, who points to a legacy of artist commissions, ranging from **Isamu Noguchi** to **Santiago Calatrava**. "We were excited by FAILE's work, and they totally immersed themselves in our history."

Experts in ephemera from their background in printmaking and poster-based street art, the artists spent days in the company's extensive archive, but it was the rehearsals and performances they attended—some viewed from backstage—that proved most influential. "That was when everything came together and gave us a better intention of what we wanted to do," says Miller. "Just seeing history is a lot different from going and experiencing it emotionally."

FAILE created a 40-foot tower, resembling a poster-encrusted plinth, that was installed on the promenade of the David H. Koch Theater for the winter season, along with a series of 12 new paintings, many incorporating cloth, copper, and handmade materials. Their second installation will debut in May, featuring such contrasting themes as beauty and beast, glam and gritty, high and low. "These different themes kept coming into our images," Miller notes. "This idea of falling—not falling down, just falling back to the ground—also comes up again and again."

"Les Ballets de FAILE," a detail from *Tower of FAILE*.

Attendees of two special "Les Ballets de Faile" performances, the next on May 29, get to take home a colorful souvenir: a small wooden block hand-painted and silkscreened by the artists. "The blocks are really the common denominator of what we've created for the ballet—they're a building block of the show. Everything is based on these 2-inch-by-2-inch dimensions and extrapolated from there," Miller explains.

As for stage fright, McNeil and Miller overcame it well before curtain call. "We really felt like outsiders at first, entering this world of the ballet, especially considering the language of our work relative to this sort of old guard," says Miller. But they soon found a way to mesh their art with dance traditions. "It was a matter of mixing the two," he adds. "A lot of our work tends to be that way, where it's looking ahead and pulling back from the past, the way that the old and the new come together."

—Stephanie Murg

Art duo Patrick Miller (left) and Patrick McNeil (right) of FAILE sitting on the base of their *Tower of FAILE* for the New York City Ballet Art Series.

TOP: FAILE; BOTTOM: DDB

Drawn to Scale

Édouard Manet's *Still-life with Salmon, Gurnard, Eel, Oysters and Lemon*, 1864.

Fish have historically proved slippery subjects for artists—and not just for the obvious reasons. Until recently, fish couldn't be photographed in their native environments, and artists had to rely on cloudy memories of seeing them underwater. Similarly, a still life with a caught creature had to be completed swiftly, before the specimen rotted. Naturalist **Christine Jackson**'s *Fish in Art*, published by Reaktion Books, uses nearly 200 images of fish—ranging from ancient Egyptian wall works to 21st-century photorealist paintings—to illustrate their religious, social, political, and economic significance.

The book, the first survey of fish in two-dimensional art, is divided by habitat, with chapters relating to the sea, the beach, the river, and still waters, as well as to the market, the kitchen, and, lastly, the table. Jackson isolates the aquatic animals' form as one that has always fascinated artists. Strokes of black ink on silk in a Song Dynasty fan coalesce into a school of fish interweaving on a golden background; hundreds of years later, **Paul Klee** depicted them as flat, primitive shapes in neon colors.

Included are major artists such as **Raphael** and **J. M. W. Turner**, as well as **Manet**, whose Impressionistic *Still-life with Salmon, Gurnard, Eel, Oysters and Lemon* (1864) demonstrates a lesson he once gave to a pupil about still-life painting. "You don't try to count the scales on the salmon," Manet instructed, "you see them as little silver pearls against gray and pink." Some famous works featuring fish as only minor characters assume a new depth, as in **Tintoretto**'s *Creation of the Animals* (1551) or **Winslow Homer**'s *The Fog Warning* (1885), in which a dark and lonely fisherman sits in sharp contrast to the huge, shining halibut in the stern of his rowboat.

There aren't many contemporary interpretations of fish in the book. However, the penultimate image is a 2005 work by **Heather Ackroyd** and **Dan Harvey** titled *Crystal Fish*, a cod skeleton that—having been dipped in an alum solution—sparkles in a studded skin of crystalline formations. It makes for a tangible catch of this elusive subject.

—Ali Pechman

Paul Klee's *Golden Fish*, 1925.

Share Holders

During the harvest season, a weekly box stuffed with vegetables has become a regular part of urban life. Community-supported agriculture, or CSA, where consumers buy shares in the output of a local farm and get regular deliveries of produce, has grown increasingly popular, and recently the model has spread to the art market.

The idea of community-supported art came up in 2010, when members of Springboard for the Arts and MN Artists, two Minnesota organizations, were brainstorming ways to expand the art-buying public. For $300, subscribers receive editioned artworks from nine artists, which they pick up in carefully packed boxes at events throughout the year. Each season since the Springboard CSA started, all 50 shares have sold out, sometimes in a matter of minutes.

A pick-up event for community-supported art at Philadelphia's Tiger Strikes Asteroid.

The success of the Minnesotans attracted notice from other arts organizations interested in establishing similar programs, and there are now more than 30 up-and-coming CSAs in cities from California to New Hampshire.

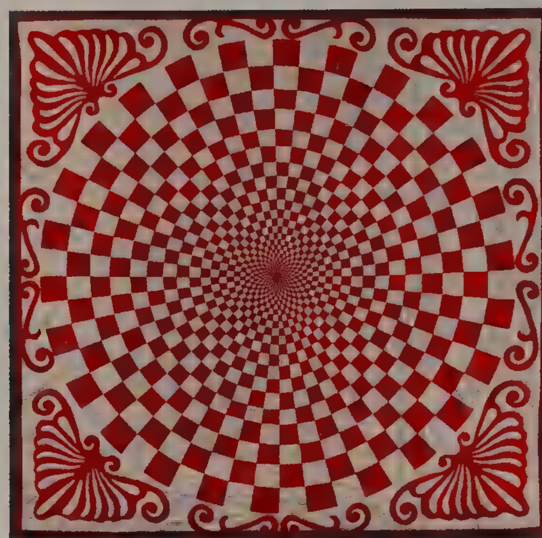
In Philadelphia, the artist-run gallery collectives Tiger Strikes Asteroid and Grizzly Grizzly launched a joint CSA last year, with a grant from the Knight Foundation (which also supports Springboard's effort to spread the CSA model). "When you think of the traditional relationship between a collector and an artist, there's usually a gallerist in between," says **Mary Smull** from Grizzly Grizzly. "We're altering that." Their first pick-up was a small gathering where artists and collectors could meet. Artworks, which ranged from watercolors on vintage writing paper to a 12-inch vinyl record in a handmade sleeve, came packed in a screenprinted tote bag. When collectors returned to the gallery for the second batch, "it was nice to see their totes fill up with art again," Smull says.

Prints and ceramics are popular shares at most CSAs, but some works are more conceptual. For her Philadelphia share, **Sarah Kate Burgess** created do-it-yourself paper rings and led a workshop on how to assemble them. And for his Springboard share last year, **Steven Lang** took photographs of gas stations in tiny Minnesota towns where he'd bought Diet Cokes, and made an edition of each can and receipt.

Collectors, on receiving this piece, were sometimes perplexed. "They look in the box and see the Diet Coke and go 'Well, what's this all about?'" recalls Springboard's **Andy Sturdevant**. Since Lang was at the pick-up, they could ask him. "It's easy to grasp that kind of work," Sturdevant says, "when you have the artist there." ***—Rebecca Robertson***

Quilt Trip

More than a half century before the ascendance of Op art, a quilt maker fashioned hundreds of pieces of red and white cloth into a hypnotic vortex. This quilt was on view in an American Folk Art Museum exhibition at New York's Park Avenue Armory a couple of years ago, when Eric Altschuler and his nine-year-old son happened upon it. "It struck me because when you look at this thing, it moves," says Altschuler, an associate professor at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey, where his research interests include neuroscience.



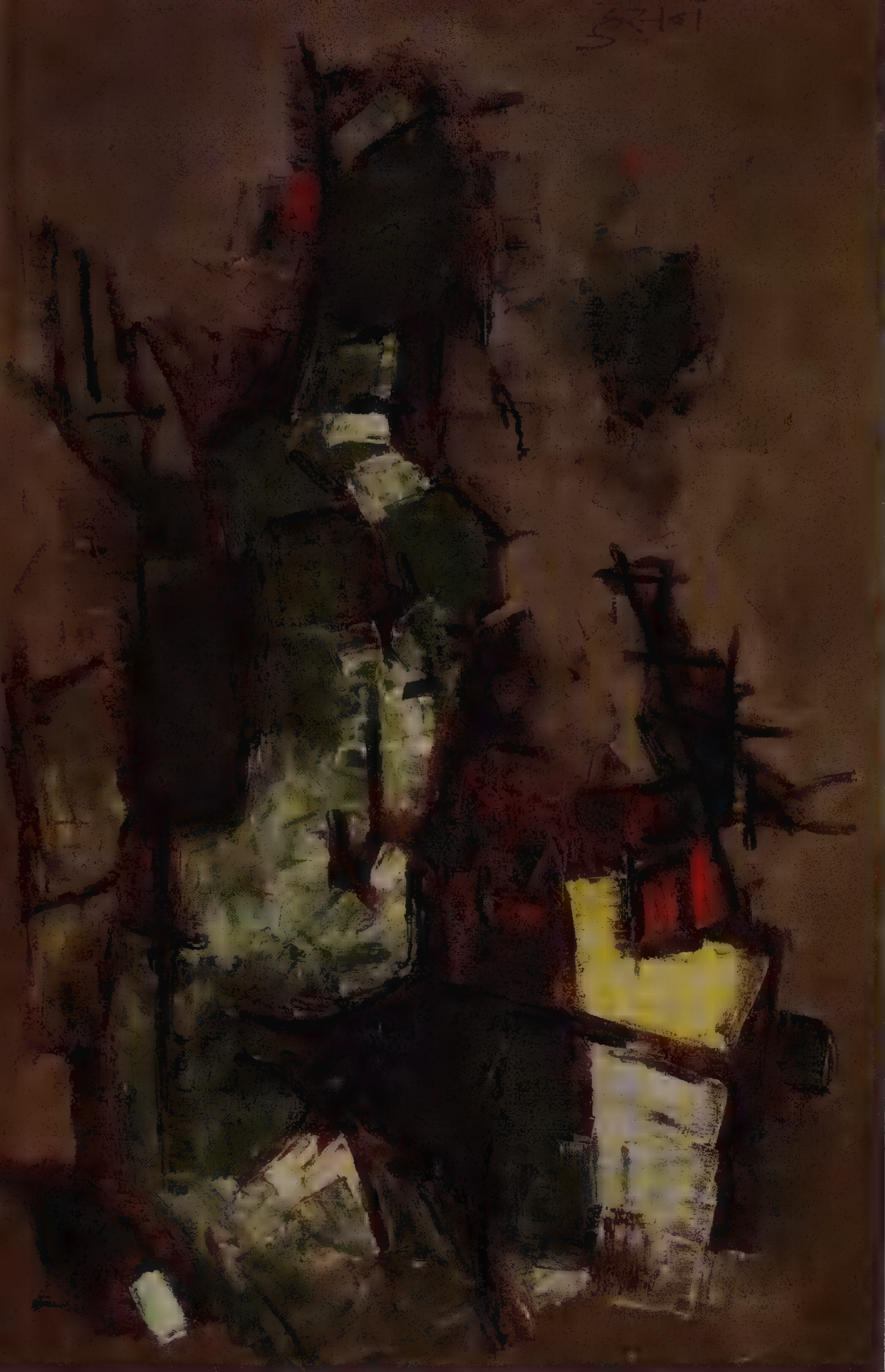
The anonymous "vortex quilt," made between 1890 and 1910.

Altschuler recently tried to digitally reproduce the perceptual effects of the quilt. Working with Italian psychologist Sergio Roncato, the professor and his students at first assumed that the illusion arises from a difference in brightness between the white and red checks. According to the gestalt principle, Altschuler explains, our brains want to follow overall patterns, such as the concentric circles that make up the quilt's design, instead of individual units. But toward the piece's center, another phenomenon throws the eye off that circular path.

After some trial and error, Altschuler's team realized that the three-dimensional whirlpool effect has more to do with the size of the checks than the contrasting colors. "If the checks are big enough, then gestalt continuity rules, and your brain will follow circles," Altschuler says. "As the checks get smaller, you tend to hop from red to red, from to white to white"—following the diagonal rather than the circle—"and that's when you get this sort of going-into-the-page effect." He presented his analysis of the quilt at a Society for Neuroscience meeting in New Orleans late last year, and a video of his computer models appeared on the *New Scientist* website.

The identity of the quilter is unknown, but experts date the needlework to between 1890 and 1910 based on the butterfly patterns around the edges. A similar vortex quilt (with a white center instead of red) was made in 1920. "Something's going on, because there were two of these quilts," Altschuler muses. "It's kind of a nice mystery." —Lamar Anderson

LEFT: JAIME ALVAREZ; RIGHT: GAVIN ASHWORTH/COLLECTION OF JOANNA S. ROSE



Self-Effacing

In the late 1950s or early '60s, Scottish painter **Craigie Aitchison** stabbed his only known self-portrait about 18 times, after a fellow artist visiting his studio suggested that Aitchison had portrayed himself in a flattering light. "He was absolutely mortified because self-aggrandizement couldn't be further from his instincts," explains **Paul Moorhouse**, curator of 20th-century portraits at London's National Portrait Gallery, which recently purchased the defaced picture.

Aitchison, who died in 2009, was best known for his serene, pared-down depictions of lambs, dogs, birds, and religious themes in vibrant colors. "He was a very diffident, shy, self-effacing person who shied away from the glare of publicity and was entirely immersed in his own work," Moorhouse says. The identity of the artist whose criticism prompted the attack on the 24-by-20-inch painting is unknown.

Some four decades later, Aitchison apparently had a change of heart about his self-portrait and agreed to allow it to be restored by **Martin Wyld**, then head of conservation at the National Gallery, on condition that the gashes remain visible. Indeed, they dominate the composition, giving a hesitant-looking Aitchison the air of a modern-day martyr, with long, vicious slashes driving into his head from every angle.

Craigie Aitchison's self-portrait still bears slash marks from when he stabbed it in the 1950s or '60s.

On the artist's death, the work came up for auction with his estate. "As soon as I saw it, I knew that we had to try and get it," says Moorhouse, due to its rarity and "this unusual iconoclasm which was part of the image." The gallery, which already owns three photographic portraits of Aitchison, paid £36,512 (about $55,500) for the painting, acquired with the help of donors.

—***Elizabeth Fullerton***

ARTnews Retrospective

100 Years Ago

The total of sales thus far at the present Academy Exhibition and the reports from dealers selling Americans and the studios, of a good market for the best American pictures, is indeed encouraging news, as it comes towards the close of a dull art season. Good prices for American paintings have been obtained and prevail at auction sales. Can it be that our native art is coming to its own with the waning demand for seemingly any but the best and famous paintings by early foreign masters at enormous prices? *—"American Art Booming," April 19, 1913*

75 Years Ago

Best known of the French artists is Rousseau, *le douanier*. His powerful expression and perfect precision are present in nearly a score of canvases. Camille Bombois, the son of a boatman, is somewhat known in this country, but in the twenty examples from his hand, his superb color, his robustness, and the forceful, unhesitating translation of exactly the world he sees, will undoubtedly make him new friends. The work of Dominique-Paul Peyronnet, a printer in color lithography, is enchantingly represented by his *Foggy Sea*, a literal presentation, instinct with a sense of pattern.

—"Primitive Painters from the People: French & American," by Jeannette Lowe, April 30, 1938

50 Years Ago

It has often been said that every generation recreates the art of the past in its own image. While this is hardly true of many famous artists, it does apply to Cézanne, who has been acclaimed by almost every school of modern criticism as an outstanding exponent of its own esthetic doctrine. Thus his late watercolors, which had seemed to Delaunay to "announce Cubism [since] the colored, or rather, luminous planes destroy the object," became for an Expressionist like Meier-Graefe, models of a spiritual austerity . . . while the Surrealists later saw in them precursors of their own magical art, "prismatic universes crossed by jagged rainbows." *—"Cézanne: The logical mystery," by Theodore Reff, April 1963*

25 Years Ago

Robert Rosenblum maintains that if there has been a loss of innocence, that's not necessarily a bad thing. "There has been a real change—artists do think of themselves as businessmen now. Yet as far as making good art or bad, it hasn't had an effect. I say emphatically that it has had no relationship to the quality of the art. The myth of the artist starving in his garret—the idea that poverty, chastity, and obedience make for good art—has been exploded." *—"Self-Portraits in a Changing Landscape," by Jamie James, April 1988*

2_Arms, Arts & Armor in Graz

In all the world, only one original historic armory exists to this day—and it's open to tours in Graz. The famed Zeughaus was built in 1642, when the city was a center of defense against neighboring territories, which attacked with alarming frequency. To this day the roughly 32,000 weapons—enough to equip an army of 5,000—are organized as they were four centuries ago. We recommend the guided tour, which presents a vivid account of the region's history, as well as an explanation of how early ammunition was made. The heavy, full-body armor, for its, is a marvel; when soldiers fell off their horses, the suits left them entirely immobile. Once you've explored the Zeughaus, climb the city mountain to see how the massive fortress helped make Graz the defensive bulwark of the region. **www.museum-joanneum.at/en/styrian_armoury**

3_Vienna Coffeehouse Conversations

You already know about Viennese coffeehouses: their cozy charms, endless lists of coffee specialties such as "Einspänner," and famously delicious pastries. Now add a twist and sign up for a "Vienna Coffeehouse Conversation," a series of events that pair up visitors with locals for one-on-one chats on subjects like travel, family, cultural, and food. Echoing a time when the likes of Sigmund Freud, Stefan Zweig and Gustav Klimt would gather in cafés to exchange ideas and debate, the "Vienna Coffeehouse Conversations" are a great way to experience the city's cultural history, learn about what's going on in town, and make friends along the way. Add in a delicious three-course menu! **www.vienna-unwrapped.com**

4_Le LOFT

Located on the 18th floor of the Sofitel Vienna Stephansdom, celebrated chef Antoine Westermann's restaurant Le LOFT has staked out inventive (and award-winning) Austrian and Alsatian flavors. The restaurant's walls are glass, its views unparalleled. Multi-media artist Pipilotti Rist's colorful illuminated panels pair strikingly with the restaurant's simple interior design. An aura of extravagance and Viennese charm pervade an international flair. **www.sofitel-vienna-stephansdom.com**

5_A Gourmet's Roadmap

You don't know a place till you've tasted its regional specialties. With this in mind, Via Culinaria was born—a gourmet guide with seven culinary paths throughout Salzburg City and SalzburgLand. From fish to cheese to sweets, from gourmet restaurants to alpine huts and organic farms, a perfect mix for travelers with ambitious gourmet tastes. The order of your route, the season and the hours are all up to you. **www.via-culinaria.com**

Image: A model from the thesis project by graduate student Katie O'Hara '12. Mixed media; 14" X 14" X 20" H

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Riddle of the Sphynx

Seized by the police in Italy, antiquities looted from archeological sites and destined for unknown markets show that tomb robbers remain active. But the Carabinieri are making progress BY JUDITH HARRIS

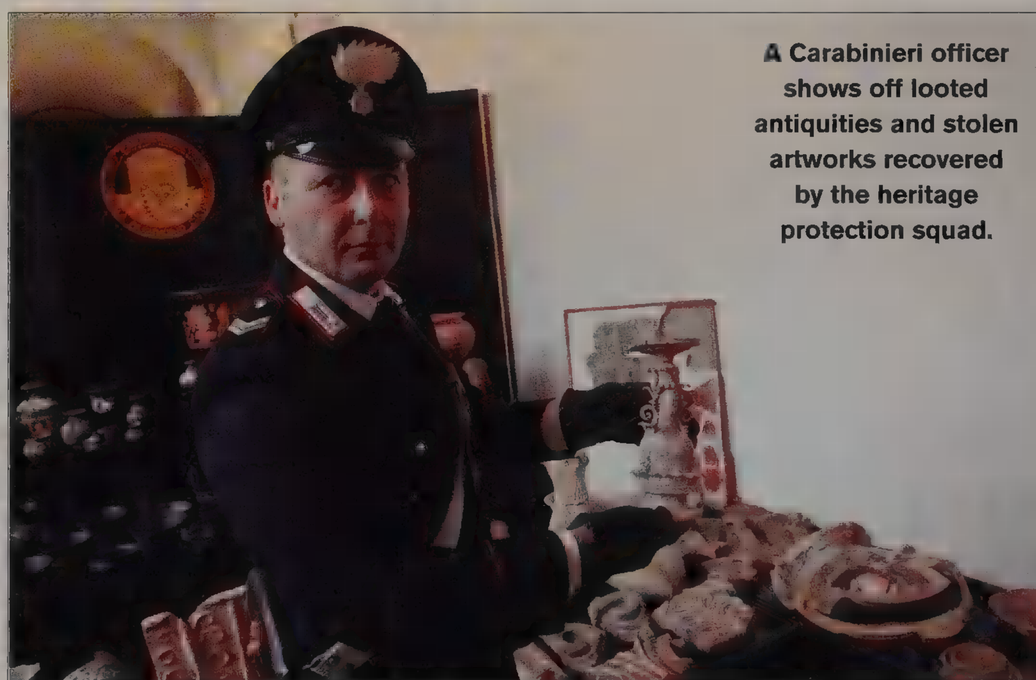
Last December, Italy's finance police stopped two men, an Italian and a Romanian, in a small truck on the Via Cassia, the ancient road north of Rome. In the truck they found a hoard of ancient pots and votive objects that were later identified as loot from a Roman-Etruscan burial site. They also found photographs of a large Egyptian sphynx carved in granite.

The find led to the sphynx itself, concealed in a greenhouse at Monterosi, midway between Rome and Viterbo. The piece was neatly crated for shipment. Police could only speculate that its destination was perhaps Russia or Japan.

As the incident shows, tomb robbers are still very active in Italy, and a shady market, particularly involving objects that sell for under $10,000, continues. One reason, say the experts, is because no census of lesser archeological artifacts in Italian private collections has ever been made.

The problems with archeological looting begin with the loss of scientific context. The objects themselves also suffer. Important pieces that have been recovered recently, such as large painted panels plundered from the dining room of a Vesuvian villa, are often badly restored and patched together in a haphazard fashion. To loot is to destroy not only context but sometimes the object itself.

The situation has improved for pieces of museum value, however. The campaign for restitution of demonstrably looted objects from American museums has brought impressive results. Speaking at a January conference on looting at Rome's National Etruscan Museum at Villa Giulia, Major Massimiliano Quagliarella of the heritage protection squad of the Carabinieri corps said that recoveries of looted objects rose by 112 percent in 2012 from 2011. During the same period, the number of clandestine excavations discovered through helicopter patrols and other sophisticated surveillance methods fell by 29 percent.



A Carabinieri officer shows off looted antiquities and stolen artworks recovered by the heritage protection squad.

MARCO MERLINI/ZUMA PRESS/NEWSCOM

"By comparison with 2008, we have seen a constant decline from the 238 illegal digs of 2008 to the 37 of last year," Quagliarella said.

Yet even as Italian demands for restitutions from the United States continue (the bronze athlete found in international waters off Fano and now in the Getty Museum is still in contention), the Italians have other countries on their lists.

Italy is seeking the return of allegedly looted objects from museums in Spain and Denmark. And some experts say that new clandestine markets for looted antiquities are opening, along with new smuggling routes. Fabio Isman, author of a book on the looting of Italy, *I predatori dell'arte perduta* (Skira, 2009), maintains that the underground traffic continues, with sales to private collectors in Japan, Russia, and the Emirates. The once-popular route through Switzerland has become more difficult, he says, whereas the "chaos and total opening of borders in the Balkan countries seems to be favoring that market."

Other experts challenge the idea that Italian antiquities are being sold illegally to collectors in the Middle East and East Asia. "No one can exclude that antiquities are sold worldwide, including in the Mideast," says Quagliarella. "But cultural values differ, and in many countries the preference is for what a collector considers akin to his own culture."

In a novel twist, Italian police are now also uncovering antiquities illegally imported into Italy from Saudi Arabia and the Emirates. ■

Judith Harris is the author of Pompeii Awakened: A Story of Rediscovery.

Wipe Your Feet!

To keep the Sistine Chapel cleaner, Vatican officials will try to keep visitors cleaner BY JUDITH HARRIS

They arrived by night in late November—cleaners armed with brooms, brushes, and a high-tech machine that allowed the crew to reach the 65-foot-high ceiling of Italy's single most revered hall, the Sistine Chapel. For 21 nights they worked from 8 P.M. until 6 A.M., dusting and taking samples of the furry crust that had built up over two decades on the 2,730 square yards of wall and ceiling paintings by Perugino, Botticelli, Ghirlandaio, and Michelangelo.

The chapel, five centuries old as of last October, is where popes are elected and is therefore the spiritual heart of the Roman Catholic Church. And, with more than five million visitors a year, it is also a moneymaker for the Vatican on the grand scale.

But these vast numbers endanger the very paintings that attract the visitors. And there is another problem. As Italian literary critic Pietro Citati wrote recently, noisy tourists roaming the chapel like "drunken hordes" make contemplation impossible.

Antonio Paolucci's wording is less aggressive, but the former culture minister for Italy and current director of the Vatican Museums agrees that drastic steps must be taken to protect the chapel paintings from the inexorable accumulation of grime. "Dust, humidity, and carbon dioxide are the enemies of paintings," he says.

Fewer visitors would be one answer. In Milan, only 20 to 25 people at a time are allowed to enter the former refectory in Santa Maria delle Grazie, where Leonardo da Vinci painted the Last Supper, and for a maximum of 15 minutes. However, on religious grounds Paolucci rejects limiting the number of visitors to the Sistine Chapel. "The chapel is sacred to Catholics all over the world," he says firmly. "They cannot be excluded when they come to Rome."

His choice is to clean the visitors by installing a carpet, 330 feet long, that will remove street dirt from their shoes before they enter. Alongside the carpet, strong suction fans will extract dust and fibers from visitors' clothing, backpacks, and hair. Inside the chapel, a new air-conditioning system will maintain a lower temperature than the system installed in 1994, which is now considered inadequate. Improved and less damaging new lighting will be functioning by late summer. "I hope to have the rest ready by the end of 2013," Paolucci told *ARTnews*.

He has already found a site within the Vatican (a tennis court formerly used by employees) where a mini-theater will be built for a virtual-reality presentation of the Sistine Chapel. The point is to introduce visitors to the complexities of the frescoes in a more complete and coherent fashion than any brief personal visit can offer. The theater should also reduce the time visitors spend inside the chapel itself while making what they see more meaningful. Even those willing to pay up to €350 (about $465) for a longer and less crowded private visit (€295 for a child) often have trouble absorbing the paintings. Paolucci is also in the process of creating a photo archive open to both scholars and visitors.

▲ **A worker cleans the mosaic floor of the Sistine Chapel.**

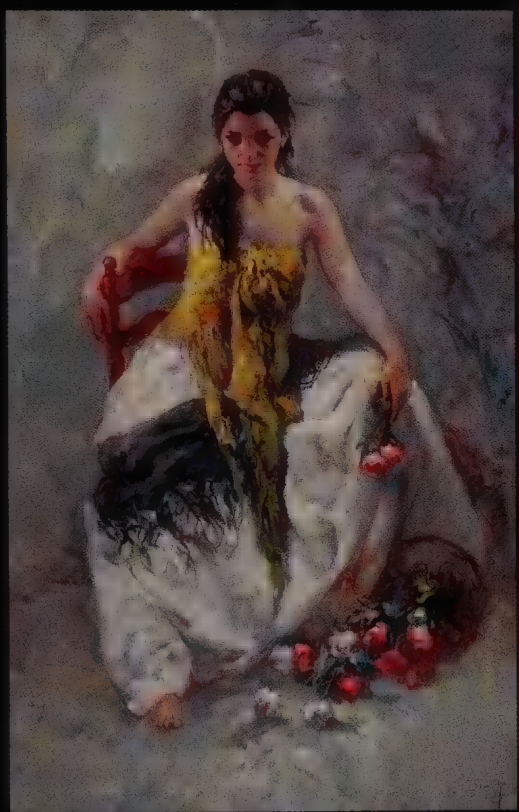
COURTESY VATICAN MUSEUMS

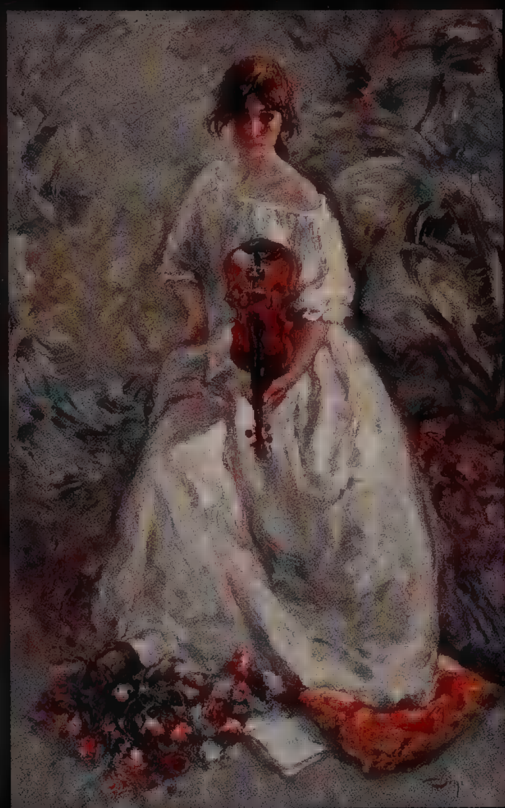
The first cleaning of the Sistine Chapel took place in 1543, only two years after Michelangelo completed *The Last Judgment*. It was Pope Paul III who created the office of official chapel cleaner, who would use dampened breadcrumbs and linen cloths to wipe away the gritty deposit left by candle smoke. For centuries, this cleaning took place once a year.

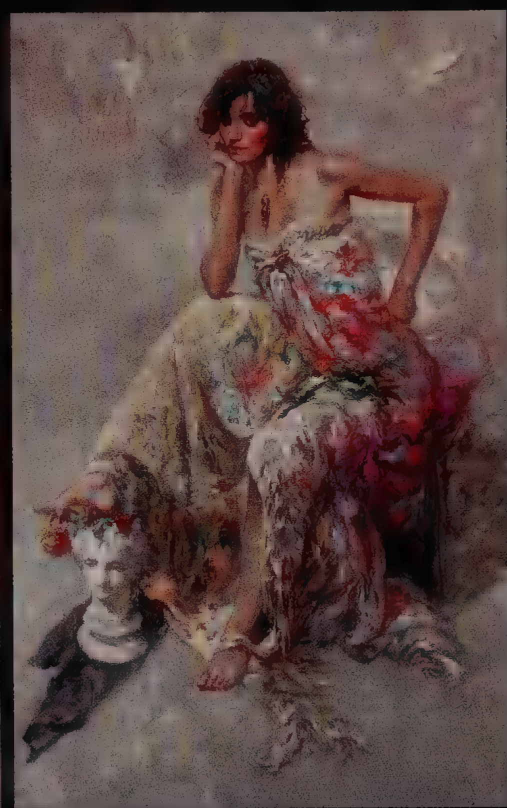
In earlier centuries, instead of cleaning the frescoes, some artists overpainted them to heighten the contrasts of the dulled originals. In 1994, when a 14-year cleaning of the frescoes was completed, these overpaintings were removed. ■

ROYO mujeres

Book & mixed media serigraphs on panel







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The Other Other Modernism

Overshadowed by revolution, sanctions, and outdated notions of the modern, Iran's vibrant postwar art scene is coming into focus at the Asia Society BY ROBIN CEMBALEST

Back in the 20th century, everyone was talking about how New York had wrested the status of modern-art capital from Paris. Nowadays, curators in the United States and Europe are vying to share the spotlight.

Shows this season at the Museum of Modern Art and the Guggenheim explored Japan's postwar avant-garde ("Gutai: Splendid Playground" remains on view at the Guggenheim through May 8). The Rubin Museum of Art's focus on modernist art from India continues with "Radical Terrain" (through April 29). In Madrid, the Reina Sofía is featuring Latin American abstraction from the 1930s through the '70s (through September 16), part of a multifaceted collaboration with the Cisneros Foundation that was launched with a conference on Latin American modernisms. And this summer in London, Tate Modern will open a retrospective of Sudan-born painter Ibrahim El-Salahi; this too is part of a larger initiative to globalize art history.

Amidst these efforts, Iran has remained the Other Other Modernism. Although Iran was very much part of the conversation in the postwar era, when its artists studied abroad, traveled freely, and gallery-hopped at home, the Islamic Revolution of 1979 moved the conversation elsewhere. Aside from NYU's Grey Art Gallery, whose founder, Abby Weed Grey, purchased hundreds of Iranian modernist works during the '60s and '70s, few U.S. institutions have committed themselves to exploring the diverse, hybrid, idiosyncratic productions of prerevolutionary Iran.

"There was this kind of blind spot," says Melissa Chiu, director of the Asia Society Museum in New York, who describes the era as transitional, influential, and overlooked. In September, the museum hopes to change the equation with "Iran Modern," an international loan show bringing together more than 100 objects from the '50s through the '70s. Curated by Fereshteh Daftari and Layla Diba, it's the most ambitious survey of Iran's prerevolutionary art to be staged outside the country. Spread over two floors of the museum, the exhibition will explore how these lesser-known Middle Eastern modernists forged their own version of an international style, borrowing liberally from Western art traditions as they inventively updated their own.

With their multi-hyphenated addresses; their habit of changing hats as artist, curator, and art impresario;

Robin Cembalest is executive editor of ARTnews.

◀ **Parviz Tanavoli, *Heech (Nothing)*, 1972.**

▼ **Houshang Pezeshknia, *Khark*, 1958.**

TOP: GREY ART GALLERY, NEW YORK UNIVERSITY ART COLLECTION, GIFT OF ABBY WEED GREY; BOTTOM: BABAK PEZESHKNIA COLLECTION

▲ **Faramarz Pilaram, *Untitled*, 1972.**

▶ **Ardeshir Mohassess, *Untitled*, 1978.**

and their tendency to sample from across the style spectrum, the Iranian modernists might have more in common with today's global avant-garde than the fabled New York School did.

Marcos Grigorian, for example, a Russian-born artist and actor, studied in Rome, ran several Tehran galleries in the late '40s and early '50s, organized the first Tehran Biennial in 1958, and opened the Universal Galleries in Minneapolis in the early '60s. Like most of Iran's artists, he developed a practice at once global and local. Using such humble materials as sand and enamel, in common with the *arte povera* artists and Antoni Tàpies in Europe, he created textured abstractions that also read as renderings of the desert.

For some Iranian artists, earlier European modernism was a strong influence. Houshang Pezeshknia, for example, depicted oil workers on the island of Khark in a 1958 portrait.

For others, the techniques and iconography of Islamic, pre-Islamic, and folk art were all fodder. Mirror mosaics and reverse mirror paintings inspired Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarmaian, who took art classes at Cornell and Parsons, befriended the Abstract Expressionists, studied with Milton Avery, and collaborated with Andy Warhol.

Seeing the Shah Cheragh Shrine in Shiraz, which she visited with Robert Morris and Marcia Hafif in 1966, was transformative for Farmanfarmaian, who, in an untitled work from the mid-'70s, infused traditional forms with geometric and gestural abstraction.

Classic miniature painting and Persian calligraphy were raw materials for a number of artists who, with a mixture of reverence and irreverence, transformed traditional, elegant letters into nonsensical writing. In a 1972 work by Faramarz Pilaram, the dancerly forms are just that—they never resolve into readable text.

"Nothing" has been the lifelong theme of Parviz Tanavoli, who has incorporated the word "Heech"—"nothingness" in Persian—into his work since 1964. A 1972 sculpture might be seen as mocking other artists' calligraphic explorations as trivial—or not. "'Heech' remains open to interpretation," Daftari says. "It can be seen as an existential statement or a political expression reducing grand official rhetoric to 'nothing.'"

This is one of 80 works by the artist acquired by Abby Weed Grey, who met Tanavoli at the second Tehran Biennial and became a longtime friend and patron. Her Iranian, Indian, and Turkish holdings formed the basis of the Grey Art Gallery's collection.

Using grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Dedalus Foundation, among others, the Asia Society has been organizing loans from public and private collections in Europe, the United States, and the Middle East—except, of course, Iran.

One of the final works in "Iran Modern" is an ink drawing by Ardeshir Mohassess, the artist and satirist who was the subject of a 2008 retrospective at the Asia Society Museum guest-curated by artists Shirin Neshat and Nicky Nodjoumi. Mohassess, who had been critical of the regime, was living in New York in 1978 when he made this drawing commenting on Iran's new reality. The revolution had begun, and the era of Iran's freewheeling avant-garde was over.

The careers of its artists, however, were not. Several figures in the Asia Society show, who had returned from abroad to live and work in Iran, continue to exhibit around the world. Farmanfarmaian and Tanavoli were featured last year at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in a small installation of contemporary Iranian art within the new Islamic galleries.

That was another sign that traditional boundaries are eroding. After "Iran Modern," we might find that these Middle Eastern modernists—now so contemporary—will enjoy a sort of renaissance in the West. ■

Working around the restrictions set by U.S. sanctions against Iran became in a sense a "curatorial principle," says Diba, a former curator of Islamic art at the Brooklyn Museum. Curators had to shape their story without classic works from the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art or from Iranian private collections.

Daftari, who organized "Without Boundary: Seventeen Ways of Looking" when she was a MoMA curator, laments the chilling effect of the sanctions on art exchange. More transparent Treasury Department regulations, she suggests, might make the possibility of applying for art loans more feasible.

"I find it highly disconcerting that sanctions should affect the representation of Iranian modern art," she comments, stressing that the opinion is her own. "Sanctions are hurting badly the average people in Iran—and now even the representation of a historical period in a museum show."

▲ **Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarmaian, *Untitled*, ca. 1975–76.**

▶ **Marcos Grigorian, *Untitled*, n.d.**

TOP: PRIVATE COLLECTION; BOTTOM: GREY ART GALLERY, NEW YORK UNIVERSITY ART COLLECTION, GIFT OF ABBY WEED GREY

BEDRI BAYKAM

DUCHAMP WOULD HAVE BEEN DAMN JEALOUS

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Beyond 'The Night Watch'

The Rijksmuseum showcases Dutch art history from the Middle Ages to the present in an expanded, redesigned space BY NINA SIEGAL

▲ **The glass-roofed atrium of the revamped Rijksmuseum.**

PEDRO PEGENAUTE/COURTESY RIJKSMUSEUM, AMSTERDAM

For the last ten years, Taco Dibbits, director of collections for the Rijksmuseum, has staged small private exhibitions inside storage facilities in Amsterdam. With his curatorial staff as his audience, he would assemble a group of paintings and related objects from the museum's million-item trove. "We started off with the concept, which was the idea of mixing different media—paintings, furniture, Delftware, and so on—and arranging them chronologically," Dibbits explains. "We made trial installations in the warehouses, where we kept the collection." There, the director and curators positioned and repositioned the treasures to "see how they worked together, so we more or less knew how they would look."

That is how, room by room, 80 exhibition halls were prepared to display 8,000 works of art for the reopening of the Dutch national museum after a decade-long, €375 million ($500 million) renovation and redesign. Meanwhile, the building's architecture has been given new life by Spanish firm Cruz y Ortiz. They preserved the outside of the 1885 Gothic Revival building, originally designed by Pierre Cuypers, while retrofitting it with contemporary elements, such as turning two courtyards into a glass-roofed atrium that is now the museum's entry hall. The results are set to be unveiled on April 13, after an inaugural ceremony led by Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands.

Despite the restoration of the exterior to its former 19th-century glory, says general director Wim Pijbes, almost everything else has changed. "We're really talking about a new museum," he says, "new walls, new exhibitions, new public spaces, a collection that has been fully restored. . . . The only thing that's brought back to the same place is *The Night Watch*." That Rembrandt masterpiece from 1642 occupies its own gallery at the heart of the complex. It connects two wings showcasing Dutch Golden Age works, including the museum's 20 Rembrandts, four Vermeers, and paintings by Frans Hals, Jan Steen, and Hendrick Avercamp.

Each floor of the 300,000-square-foot Rijksmuseum covers a different century, from the Middle Ages to the present, making it simpler for visitors to explore Dutch art history, says Pijbes. And although the original building was made for about 200,000 annual visitors, Pijbes now expects more than 2 million each year. To make room for all those people within the exhibition halls and to accomodate the necessary technology, a giant moat was constructed around the museum—below sea level—in which the plumbing, electrical, and climate-control systems are hidden from public view.

"We found a lot of new space within the footprint of the existing building, because we decided to remove all 20th-century additions and offices, so there's more interior space," Pijbes says. "The exterior, the Great Hall, the Hall of Honor, the great staircases, and the gardens to a certain extent—these elements are completely brought back and renovated to 1885. And at the same time, the rest of the space, including the new galleries, the garderobe, café, elevators, shop, have been renovated to our times."

In the weeks leading up to the opening, Dibbits has been watching the countdown on a digital billboard mounted to the museum's facade. The clock was conceived by Dutch designer Maarten Baas and is visible from the director's office window. "In the end," Dibbits says, "I think I got everything in there I wanted to get in there." ■

Nina Siegal is an American journalist, author, and editor based in Amsterdam.


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SPOTLIGHT

Remixing Minneapolis

Elizabeth Armstrong brings 'truthiness' and a contemporary edginess to an encyclopedic museum collection BY ANN LANDI

'What does contemporary art mean here, and how can it animate what we have already?" muses Elizabeth Armstrong, founding curator of contemporary art at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts (MIA). "If I bring in a Kehinde Wiley painting, it's exciting on its own. But to put it in a Baroque gallery, to see a larger-than-life black man staring out at you? That was our first step." This type of unexpected juxtaposition embodies the curatorial mission of Armstrong, who, in less than five years, has coaxed and coached the respectable but rather staid MIA—a Midwestern landmark best known for its collections of Asian objects and Old Master works—into embracing art made since the 1960s.

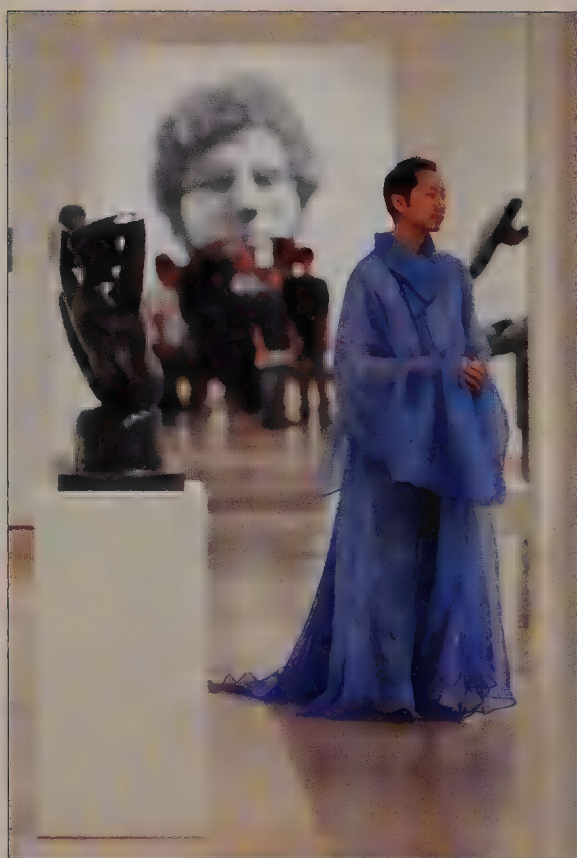
Curator Elizabeth Armstrong.

Besides pioneering the museum's "ArtReMix" program, in which up-to-the-minute pieces are installed alongside classics from the collection, Armstrong has raised $5 million for the MIA's acquisition of contemporary art, introduced an artist-in-residence program, and established a progressive curatorial think tank. Her latest brainchild is a show she organized with SITE Sante Fe called "More Real? Art in the Age of Truthiness." On view at the MIA through June 9, and including works by international art stars such as Ai Weiwei, Mark Dion, and Thomas Demand, the exhibition explores the uncertain state of reality in an age when misinformation and information are sometimes indistinguishable.

A striking blond known to wear green nail polish, Armstrong cut her curatorial teeth at the nearby Walker Art Center between 1982 and 1996. She grew up in Bedminster, New Jersey, making regular visits to New York's museums, and attended Hampshire College in Amherst, Massachusetts, where students designed their own majors. "By about the age of ten, I was thinking I could be an artist," she says, "but by the middle of my college career, I realized I was much more interested in interpreting art and in history and cultural studies."

After graduating, Armstrong spent a year working with the National Endowment for the Humanities, realized that she would need an advanced degree to pursue a museum-related career, and headed off to Berkeley, where she earned a reputation for being a bit of a maverick in her approach to art and art history. "I was interested in something that is now called 'perception theory,'" she says, "and I wrote my thesis on a subject my professors said would be terrible for my career: Paul Cadmus." What intrigued Armstrong about the self-described "literary painter," she explains, was how he went from being considered one of the most important American artists in the 1920s to falling off the map entirely by the '60s.

The Berkeley experience also gave her the opportunity to work part-time in museums, including the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and the Lowie Museum of Anthropology (now the Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology) at Berkeley. "That was an early index of how I was interested in art's relationship to broader aspects of the culture—to politics and social dynamics," she reflects. In 1982, she was accepted into the Walker Art Center's prestigious one-year internship. She ended up staying 14 years.



Artist-in-residence Marcus Young silently strolls the MIA galleries.

▲ **A tropical pop-up park transformed the museum's lobby last year.**

While working with then-director Martin Friedman, whom she describes as extremely focused on allowing artists to collaborate with curators as innovators and problem solvers, Armstrong organized shows on the Fluxus movement, Jasper Johns, Laurie Simmons, and many others. Next came a job as senior curator at the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, where she worked until 2001. "I thought if I was going to make a change, I'd better do it while my two kids were still young," says Armstrong, who was newly divorced at the time. "San Diego was a smaller place, one where I could be more part of a leadership team." During her time there, she worked closely with the community, traveled to Mexico and South America, and ended up organizing the critically acclaimed travelling 2000 exhibition "Ultrabaroque: Aspects of Post-Latin American Art."

From the moment she arrived in Southern California in 1996, Armstrong began conceiving of a groundbreaking show she would eventually mount in 2008 at the Orange County Museum of Art, where she was working as chief curator and deputy director. Titled "Birth of the Cool," the show stemmed from Armstrong's desire "to understand what aspects of California and its culture made it different," and explored how modernism ended up on the West Coast by linking artists with architects, cool jazz, and experimental filmmaking. It was, she says, "a difficult and fascinating time to be working with a museum that had so many internal structural problems."

In 2008, the MIA and its new director, Kaywin Feldman, lured Armstrong back to Minnesota to head up the institution's first contemporary-art department as the founding curator. "I knew it could be really fun," Armstrong says, "and it also seemed to me that it was time to take some more contemporary approaches to how a museum displayed and presented art. The decision to bring in the art of the present also had to do with a bigger decision as to how the museum could revitalize itself."

To that end, she recently created the MIA's Center for Alternative Museum Practice (CAMP)—an "incubator" housed in a museum lounge where curators and staff discuss how to bring fresh, contemporary practices to the museum as a whole. "How do you take a traditional audience and a traditional museum and make contemporary art meaningful and not just an add-on?" asks Armstrong, who is CAMP's director. "It's the reason I so enjoy being a curator in this complex."

The artist-in-residence program, also started by Armstrong, has brought in contemporary figures such as Marcus Young, who lived in the museum for ten days, walking around in zen-like blue robes and working silently with the museum's janitorial staff as part of a meditative exercise. "We always talk about engaging people in terms of wonder," Armstrong says. "Our visitors couldn't stop following him around. He was like a beautiful and powerful object—an object of wonder." ■

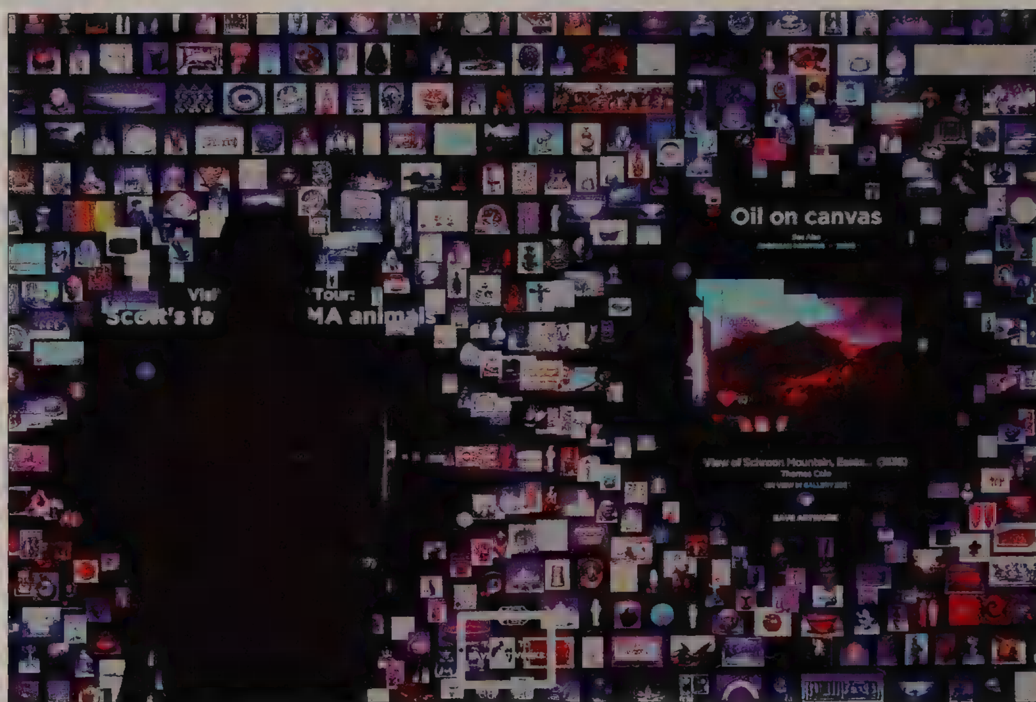
Ann Landi is a contributing editor of ARTnews.

Apps, Maps, and Hot Spots

The Cleveland Museum launches an ambitious digital education experiment BY STEVEN LITT

At the heart of the Cleveland Museum of Art's $10 million-plus educational experiment in digital technology, which launched in January, is a free app for the iPad called ArtLens. Developed by a team of more than 30 staff members over an 18-month period, the program—which can be downloaded on personal iPads or accessed on devices supplied by the museum that can be rented for $5—enables visitors to freely roam the institution, accessing content as they go. One feature allows users to construct their own tours according to personal interests, or to tap into tours prepared by museum staff, including director David Franklin. The app also comes with a number of interactive maps that indicate a user's location and guide him or her to significant artworks that are located nearby.

ArtLens features nearly nine hours of explanatory audio and video segments, recorded by curators and outside experts, about hundreds of objects in the museum's permanent collection—plus hundreds of snippets of supplementary text. Another special feature "recognizes" selected paintings with the iPad camera, pulls up a digital version of each image, and highlights the work's significant "hot spots" with drawn circles that are linked to blocks of explanatory or interpretive text. (The software can't yet recognize sculptures or other three-dimensional artworks.) Franklin is confident that the new technology will foster a greater appreciation for the authenticity of the original objects rather than distracting viewers.



▲ **A museum visitor browses the "Collection Wall" in Gallery One.**

The app is just one part of the museum's extensive educational initiative, which includes a new 10,000-square-foot educational center called Gallery One—the latest venture in an eight-year, $350-million expansion and renovation, headed by architect Rafael Viñoly and due for completion in December. Located between the institution's main entrance and its vast new central atrium, Gallery One was conceived as a point of welcome and orientation, and contains 55 well-known objects from the permanent collection, by artists including Giovanni Paolo Panini and George Segal. These are organized into six thematic groups and arranged around large interactive displays that guide visitors through the works, comparing stylistic and representational traits or pointing out iconographic motifs. Anchoring the space is a 40-foot-long interactive screen called the "Collection Wall," which the museum claims is the biggest of its kind in any American art museum. Visitors can use the wall to build custom tours in ArtLens by tapping images of the works that interest them—all of which float slowly across the screen like leaves in a stream—and then transferring them to their iPads with the swipe of a finger.

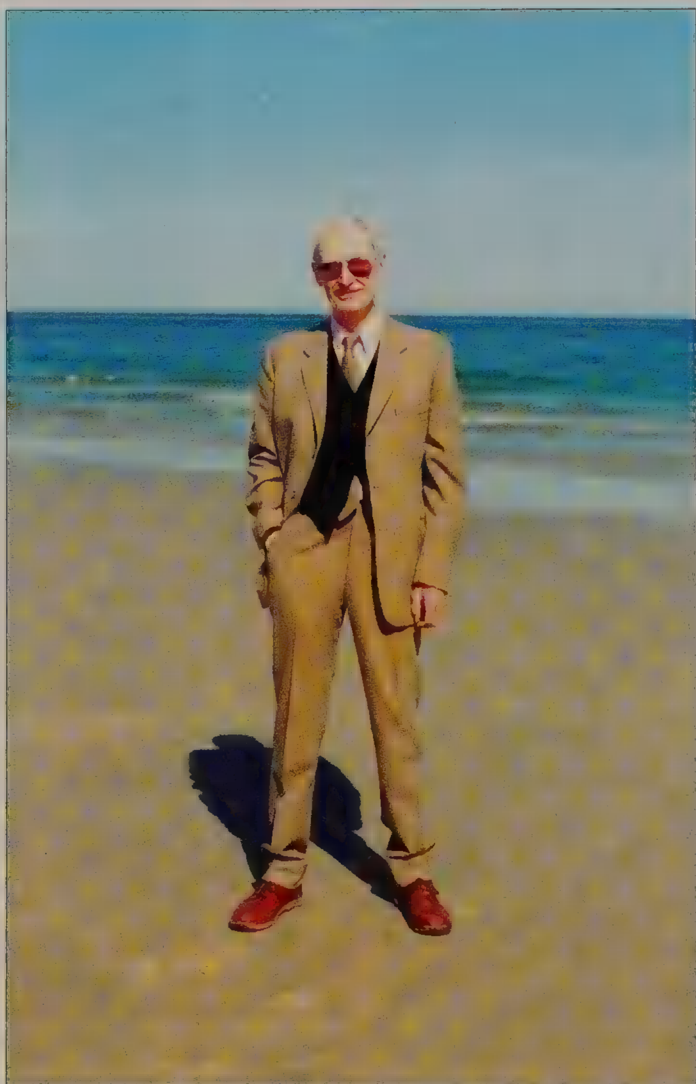
Gallery One and ArtLens have already proven popular. In its first three days, the app was downloaded by 1,400 users, museum officials say, and the gallery is constantly packed with adults, children, and school groups. The project seems to have drawn the attention of other museums as well. Peter Samis, associate curator for interpretive media at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, explains that the Cleveland initiative has set the bar for institutions across the country, and he believes that others are sure to follow. "The eyes of the museum field are on Cleveland right now," he says. ■

Steven Litt is the art and architecture critic of the Plain Dealer *in Cleveland.*

What a Long Strange Blp It's Been

Richard Artschwager, master of the practical, the absurd, and the mordant BY LILLY WEI

A painter and sculptor identified with Pop, Minimalism, and Conceptualism, Richard Artschwager died February 9 at the age of 89. Known for his maverick esthetic, he has always eluded categorization. He started out making paintings and drawings but opted for sculpture following a 1960 commission to produce portable altars for ships. He had also become a furniture maker in the '50s to support his family. This led him to craft objects in wood and, famously, Formica, inspiring him to reconsider the artistic possibilities of utilitarian forms like tables, chairs, bureaus, and cabinets. He transformed these into what he called "useless objects," a combination of the practical, the humorous, the absurd, and the mordant.



▲ Artschwager in a photograph by his wife, Ann.

In 1965, Artschwager had his first solo show at the legendary Leo Castelli Gallery. Soon after, his work was shown at the Whitney Museum of American Art. He had two retrospectives at the Whitney, one in 1988 and another that closed February 3, a week before his death. Represented by Castelli until 1985, Artschwager then joined Mary Boone in 1991, eventually moving to David Nolan and Gagosian in 1998. His solo exhibition at Gagosian in Rome last fall was his first in that city. He also participated in many important international surveys, including the Venice Biennale and Documenta. Artschwager influenced numerous artists over the decades, including Haim Steinbach and Ashley Bickerton. His unclassifiable art and independent spirit remain a magnet for younger practitioners. At Venice in 2009, Rachel Harrison reprised his iconic *Table with Pink Tablecloth*, 1964, a wooden box veneered in pink Formica that slyly mated Donald Judd with Magritte and Pop. He was an American original who memorably, consistently confounded expectations for more than half a century, to the delight of his viewers.

Artschwager was also known for his "blps," the abstract lozenges that suggest blown-up punctuation marks. Installing them both inside and outside, he disrupted and marked spaces that might otherwise be overlooked.

Artschwager's paintings are also a mélange, often black-and-white versions of found photographs of individuals, group portraits, building demolitions, and train wrecks, among other subjects, on roughly textured, industrial Celotex panels—another signature material. "The best chance for me to be understood," Artschwager said recently, "is for the viewer to look at the work."

Richard Ernst Artschwager was born in Washington, D.C. His parents were immigrants from Germany and Ukraine. The family moved to Las Cruces, New Mexico, in 1933. That landscape and its colors were the subject of both his first painting show, when he resumed art-making in 1958, and one of his last, at David Nolan this past December. Like his father, Artschwager studied at Cornell, majoring in mathematics and sciences, but like his mother, he was also deeply engaged in art. He was drafted into the U.S. Army in 1944, fought in Europe, and was later assigned to counterintelligence. Upon his return, he completed his B.A. degree at Cornell and then moved to New York, where he studied with Amédée Ozenfant, a cofounder of Purism. Artschwager lived in Hudson, New York. ■

Lilly Wei is a New York–based art critic and independent curator.

How Many Light Bulbs Does It Take to Discolor a van Gogh?

Last year, conservators at the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam noticed that areas of bright yellow paint in many of the artist's works, such as *Sunflowers*, were turning shades of green and brown. To find out why, they teamed up with scientists at the University of Antwerp in Belgium.

Online news reports claimed that the scientists found prolonged exposure to LED lights to be the cause of the darkening. That conclusion, however, is inaccurate. "This was not a study into the effects of LED lighting," says Ella Hendriks, a senior conservator at the Van Gogh Museum. "It was a study on the aging process of the yellow pigment."

Lead by Koen Janssens, the Antwerp researchers tested samples of the browning paint and identified it as chrome yellow. Janssens and his team then found that exposure to light caused samples of chrome yellow to darken. Lighter shades of the pigment, he explained, darkened quickly because they contain a high amount of sulfur, which makes them more susceptible to chemical reactions. Dark shades of chrome yellow contain little sulfur, and were less effected by light.

▲ **Vincent van Gogh, *Sunflowers*, 1889. Are the yellows at risk?**

The darkening of the paint is permanent, says Janssens, and "to reverse this chemical reaction would likely cause more damage to the paintings." But the study did not isolate which band of light caused the browning or attribute it solely to LED bulbs.

This information is still of use to museums. As institutions phase out halogen and incandescent lighting in favor of energy-efficient alternatives like LED bulbs, they need to understand the possible effects these lights will have on artworks. "Like other museums, we are considering the switch to LED lighting," says Hendriks. "We will certainly take this information on board with us when making a final decision."

—*Stephanie Strasnick*

News Briefs

TRANSITIONS

■ **Kim Sajet** has been appointed director of the **National Portrait Gallery** in Washington, D.C. Most recently president and CEO of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Sajet replaces Martin Sullivan.

Kim Sajet.

■ **Julia Marciari-Alexander** has been named executive director of the **Walters Art Museum** in Baltimore. Most recently deputy director for curatorial affairs at the San Diego Museum of Art, Marciari-Alexander succeeds Gary Vikan.

■ **Renaud Proch** is the new executive director of **Independent Curators International (ICI)**. He has been the organization's deputy director since 2009 and replaces Kate Fowle, who is the new chief curator of the Garage Center for Contemporary Culture in Moscow.

AWARD

■ **Trenton Doyle Hancock** is the winner of the **Greenfield Prize**. The $30,000 award is given anually by the Greenfield Foundation and the Hermitage Artist Retreat.

Trenton Doyle Hancock.

OBITUARY

■ **Udo Kultermann, art historian, 85.**
Born in Germany in 1927, Kultermann was a noted scholar, author, and educator. He received a Ph.D. from the University of Muenster and served as director of the City Art Museum in Leverkusen, Germany. In 1969, Kultermann began teaching art and architecture at Washington University in Saint Louis, where he worked for more than 30 years. He was the author of many articles and published more than 35 books throughout his career.

—*Stephanie Strasnick*

Corrections:
The collaboration between photo editors from *TIME* and Jen Bekman's 20x200—which sold editions of prints to benefit local hurricane relief organizations—was called Art for Sandy Relief, not the Art for Sandy Relief Fund ("A Climate Change in the Art World?," January 2013).

The 1994 exhibition "Japanese Art After 1945: Scream Against the Sky" was organized by the Yokohama Museum of Art and the Japan Foundation. Alexandra Munroe was a curator at the Yokohama Museum at that time. The show traveled to the Guggenheim Museum and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art ("Japan's Postwar Art Wave," January 2013).

The Golden Age of Abstraction: Right Now

Riffing on the past as it comments on our own time, contemporary abstraction evokes landscapes, bodies, signs, buildings, and much more

BY PEPE KARMEL

It's tempting to see the years 1912–25 and 1947–70 as the two golden ages of abstract art, and to feel that the present revival of abstraction is no more than a silver age. But the present is always deceptive: it was not evident to their contemporaries that Malevich, Mondrian, and Pollock were the towering giants they seem to us in retrospect. The fact is, there is a vast amount of good abstract art being made today, and the best of it is every bit as good as the best abstract art of the past. The golden age of abstraction is *right now*.

Museums and art centers have lately been taking a remarkable interest in abstract art, past and present. Last year, MoMA opened "Inventing Abstraction, 1910–1925"; the Guggenheim offered "Art of Another Kind," comparing American and European abstraction of the 1950s; "Destroy the Picture," at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, explored the fascination with dirty, distressed materials among artists of the same era; the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal traced the impressive history of Canadian abstraction since 1939; the Hunter College/Times Square Gallery presented "Conceptual Abstraction," a survey (which I curated with Joachim Pissarro) of 20 abstract painters who came to prominence in New York in the 1980s; and MUDAM (the Musée d'Art Moderne) in Luxembourg gathered 23 contemporary European artists in "Les Détours de l'abstraction." Already in 2013, the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis has opened "Painter Painter," a survey of emerging abstract painters from both the U.S. and Europe, and next month, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago opens "MCA DNA Chicago Conceptual Abstraction,1986–1995," with works in various mediums.

How do we make sense of all this activity in a type of art that was declared dead 40 years ago? I believe the most useful way to understand abstraction is not in terms of its formal evolution (which does not, in any case, fit the linear models beloved of theoreticians) but in terms of thematic content. The formal qualities of an abstract painting or sculpture are significant not in themselves but as part of the work's expressive message. Artists work by reviving and transforming archetypes from the unconscious of modern culture. Therefore, the most useful questions to ask about contemporary abstract painting or sculpture are: What themes and forms does it retrieve from the tradition of modern art? How have they been changed? And how has the artist used them to express the social, political, and spiritual experience of our own time?

We might view abstract art as falling into six basic categories. Three respond to nature: cosmologies, landscapes, and anatomies. And three respond to culture: fabrics, architecture, and signs. These categories are not mutually exclusive. It often happens, for instance, that cosmological images include anatomical imagery or that images inspired by fabric patterns include drawn or written signs.

OPPOSITE Chris Martin's *Seven Pointed Star for Isaac Hayes*, 2009, touches on cosmology and technology.

1. Cosmologies

Cosmological imagery in modern art assumes three main forms: orbs, orbits, and constellations. The orbs and orbits in the work of pioneering abstract artists like Alexander Rodchenko and

Pepe Karmel is associate professor of art history at New York University.


SEVEN POINTED STAR FOR ISAAC HAYES...
2008... CM

Liubov′ Popova reflected the Russian avant-garde's obsession with space travel as an allegory of revolution: the cosmonaut left behind the corrupt old world to build a rational utopia in outer space.

Another kind of cosmological imagery emerged in the 1920s: the constellation or star chart, consisting of an array of dots connected by lines. In the late 1940s, Pollock took the fixed constellations and set them into motion, in paintings like *Reflection of the Big Dipper* (1947). Both static and mobile versions of the motif play important roles in contemporary abstraction.

For the Parisian Surrealists, the dot-and-line motif of the star chart was significant as an example of the way that intelligible meaning (the figurative image of Orion or the Great Bear) can emerge from chance events (the random distribution of stars in the night sky). For a contemporary audience, however, the same formal motif is likely to read not as a literal constellation but as the more abstract image of a network.

Chris Martin's cagelike "constellations" evoke the Internet Age, with its promise of total connectedness and its threat of incessant surveillance. The funky, handmade facture of his painting, with papier-mâché spheres emerging at each node, reasserts the value of flawed humanity over the seamless web of technology. Julie Mehretu's paintings similarly transform the meaning of her sources. Where Pollock's swirling constellations appeared to their original audience as images of the Jungian unconscious, Mehretu's grids and streaks, punctuated by shifting crowds and billowing smoke, express the dynamism and turmoil of the global economy.

Among contemporary painters, David Row combines orbital imagery with crystalline forms, shifting its meaning from social and utopian to spiritual and transcendent. Other abstract artists using cosmological imagery include Olafur Eliasson, Iole de Freitas, Bill Komoski, Albert Oehlen, Matthew Ritchie, Peter Schuyff, and Christopher Wool.

Anish Kapoor's *Cloud Gate*, 2004, in Chicago's Millennium Park, reflects and distorts the surrounding landscape.

2. Landscapes

A half-century ago, in the February 1961 issue of *ARTnews*, the iconoclastic art historian Robert Rosenblum coined the term "abstract sublime" to describe the way that the paintings of Clyfford Still, Mark Rothko, and Barnett Newman call to mind a sense of the immensity and power of nature comparable to that found in the landscapes of such Romantic painters as J.M.W. Turner and Caspar David Friedrich. While the sublime may be out of fashion, references to the natural landscape persist in contemporary abstraction.

The huge popularity of Anish Kapoor's monumental *Cloud Gate* may be due to the hallucinatory impression it gives of having brought the heavens down to Earth. At the same time, the sculpture's mirrorlike skin, recalling Brancusi's polished bronzes, places it in the avant-garde tradition of art that

actively interacts with its viewers and its environment. In the setting of downtown Chicago, Kapoor's silvered sculpture seems to absorb, concentrate, and reemit the essence of a great American metropolis.

Of course, abstract art does not need to be monumental to evoke the natural environment. David Reed shades his gestural brushwork with such precision that it suggests roiling clouds over a western landscape. Gerhard Richter's abstract pictures glow with the same damp, shimmering light as his paintings of the German countryside. His translucent colors and modulated shading look like photographs even in his nonfigurative compositions.

At the opposite extreme, Mary Heilmann uses opaque colors and rough brushwork to avoid any hint of illusionism. Nonetheless, the baroque swerves and switchbacks of her stacked bands in a painting like *Surfing on Acid* (2005) suggest the parallel lines of waves approaching a beach, swelling and breaking as they near the shore. Using the new technology of digital animation, Jennifer Steinkamp transforms trees, vines, and branches into writhing, abstract arabesques. Landscape-related imagery also appears in the abstract work of Tara Donovan, Stephen Ellis, Anoka Faruqee, Jacqueline Humphries, Shirley Kaneda, Wolfgang Laib, Fabian Marcaccio, Joseph Marioni, Odili Donald Odita, Cornelia Parker, Joanna Pousette-Dart, Pat Steir, William Wood, Sanford Wurmfeld, and John Zinsser.

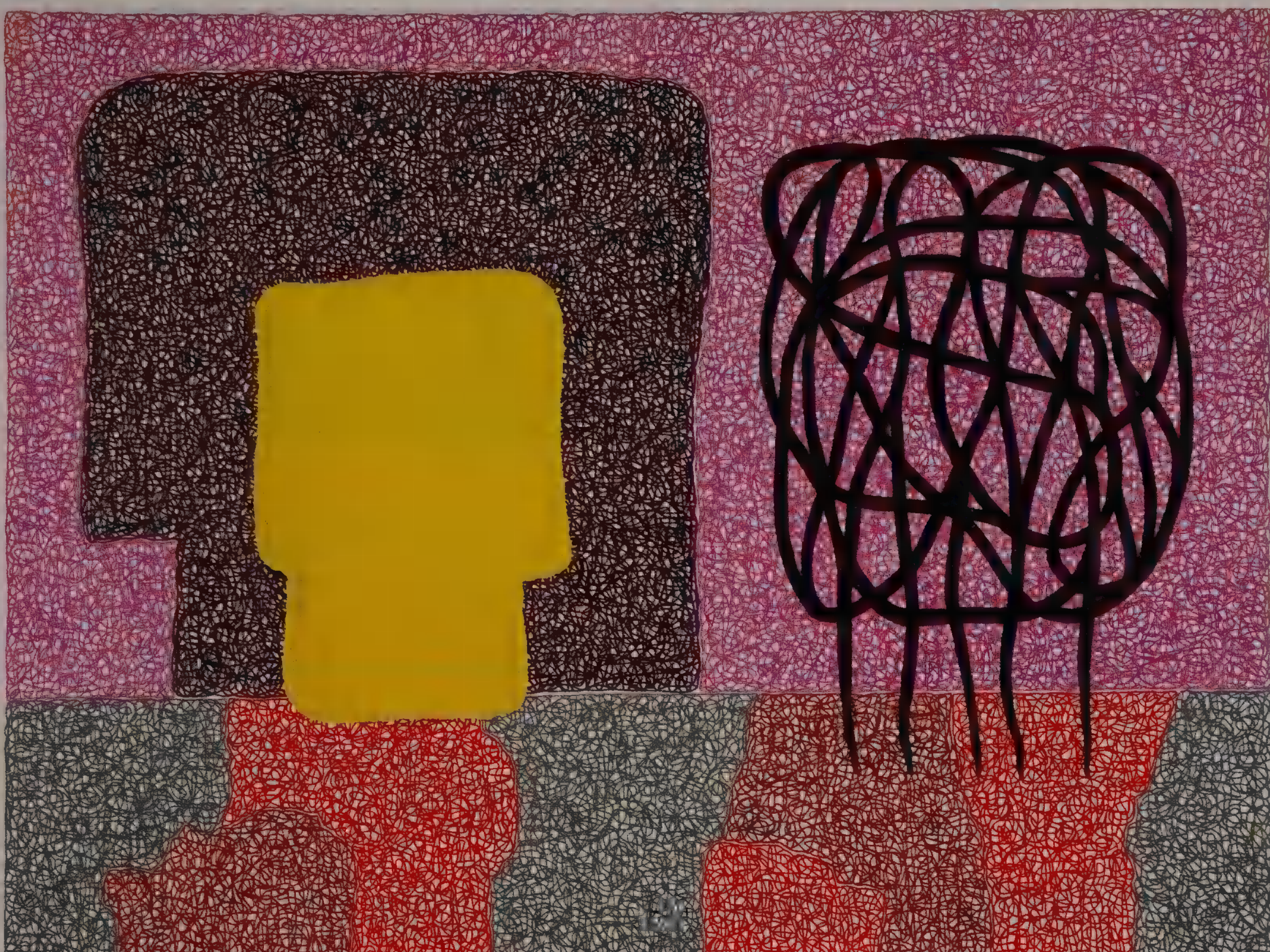
Jonathan Lasker's *The Quotidian and the Question*, 2007, suggests anatomical structures.

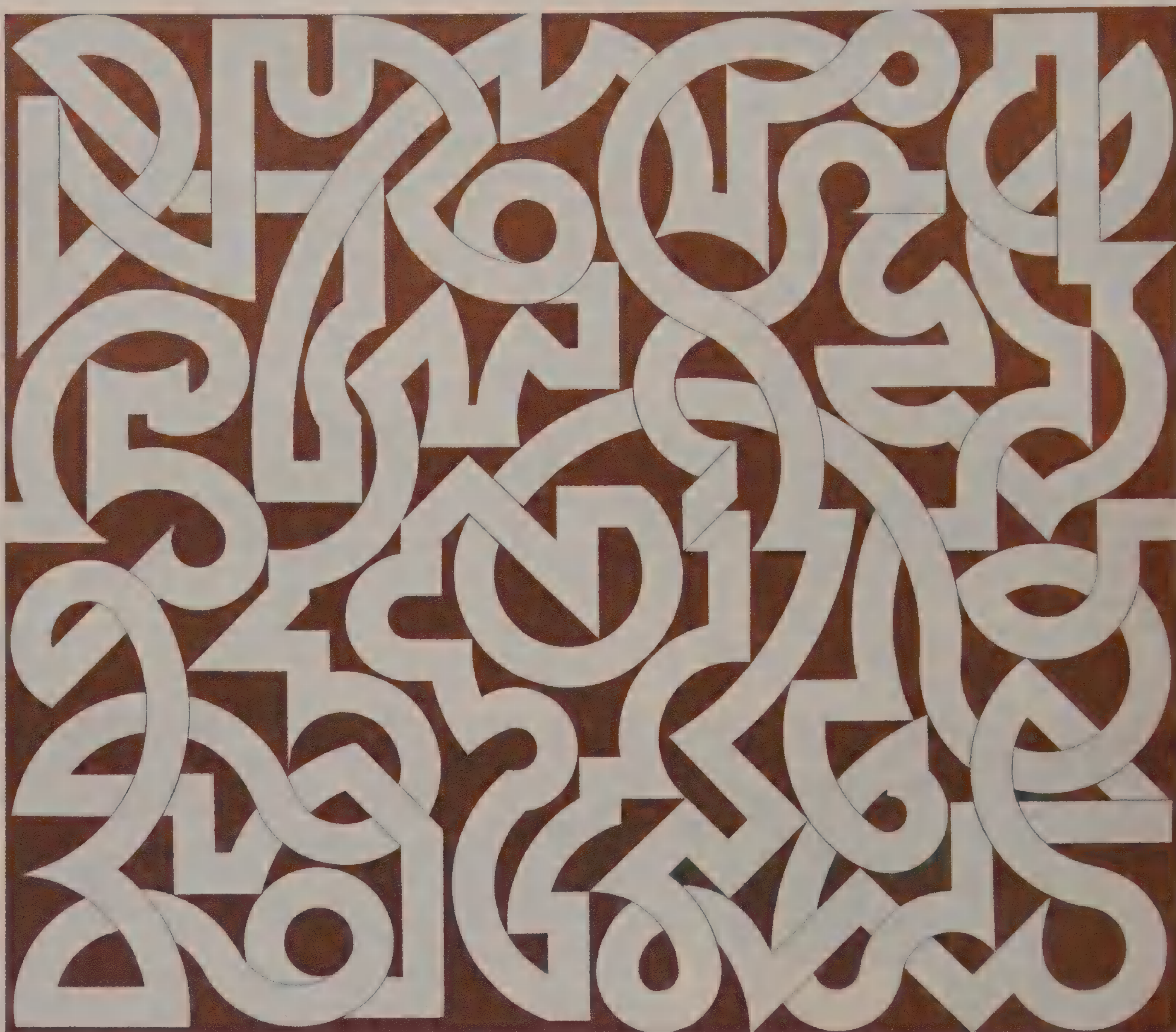
3. Anatomies

In Jonathan Lasker's canvases, thinly painted stage sets and imaginary landscapes are occupied by brooding presences laid in with thick strokes of impasto. These "presences" have typically come to take the form of P-shaped configurations suggesting massive heads that confront one another, like the haunted eyeballs and truncated feet of late Philip Guston.

However, the abstract anatomies of contemporary artists rarely correspond to the image of the human body as a whole. Instead, their work tends to hint at individual body parts, internal organs, or the "abject" substances excreted by the body. The masterwork of sculptor Tim Hawkinson is an enormous installation of floating bladders linked by long intestinal tubes, appropriately titled *Uberorgan*. Among painters, Sue Williams has created throbbing allover compositions of sexual organs, while Carrie Moyer uses biomorphic curves and blushing colors to intimate arousal in compositions that initially look like abstract landscapes.

Leaving the recognizable body further behind, Ingrid Calame depicts a universe of drips, stains, and smears, their pathetic associations offset by bright, incongruous colors. It seems at first





glance that Calame's skeins and pools of color must have been dripped freely onto canvas, Pollock-style. However, the apparent fluidity of her work is the result of a meticulous process of tracing markings found on sidewalks, floors, and streets. These drawings on translucent paper are archived and then arranged in layers to create new compositions.

We can also find more or less bodily images in the abstract paintings and sculptures of Ghada Amer, Ross Bleckner, Chakaia Booker, Cecily Brown, Lydia Dona, Christian Eckart, Margaret Evangeline, Ellen Gallagher, Charline von Heyl, Rosy Keyser, Giles Lyon, Thomas Nozkowski, Roxy Paine, Monique Prieto, Martin Puryear, Ursula von Rydingsvard, James Siena, and Mark Dean Veca.

4. Fabrics

Turning from natural to man-made models for abstraction, fabric has figured prominently as a source of inspiration. Throughout much of the 20th century, male abstract artists rejected comparisons between their paintings and decorative fabrics. In the 1970s, however, women artists, such as Miriam Schapiro and Joyce Kozloff, set out to revindicate decoration and to use it as the point of departure for a new, feminist mode of abstraction. The artists (both male and female) of the Pattern and Decoration movement often incorporated representational and architectural elements into their brilliantly colored compositions.

The work of Valerie Jaudon, who emerged from the Pattern and Decoration movement, has remained highly abstract but alludes to the repeat patterns of fabric or wallpaper, as in *Circa*, 2012.

Of the artists emerging from this movement, Valerie Jaudon has remained one of the most severely abstract. In her recent work, she almost eliminates color, using only black and white, or white paint on bare brown linen. But she combines this austere palette with a sensual profusion of pattern, numbing and teasing the mind like a carved wooden panel from the Alhambra. Her designs suggest the repeat patterns of fabric or

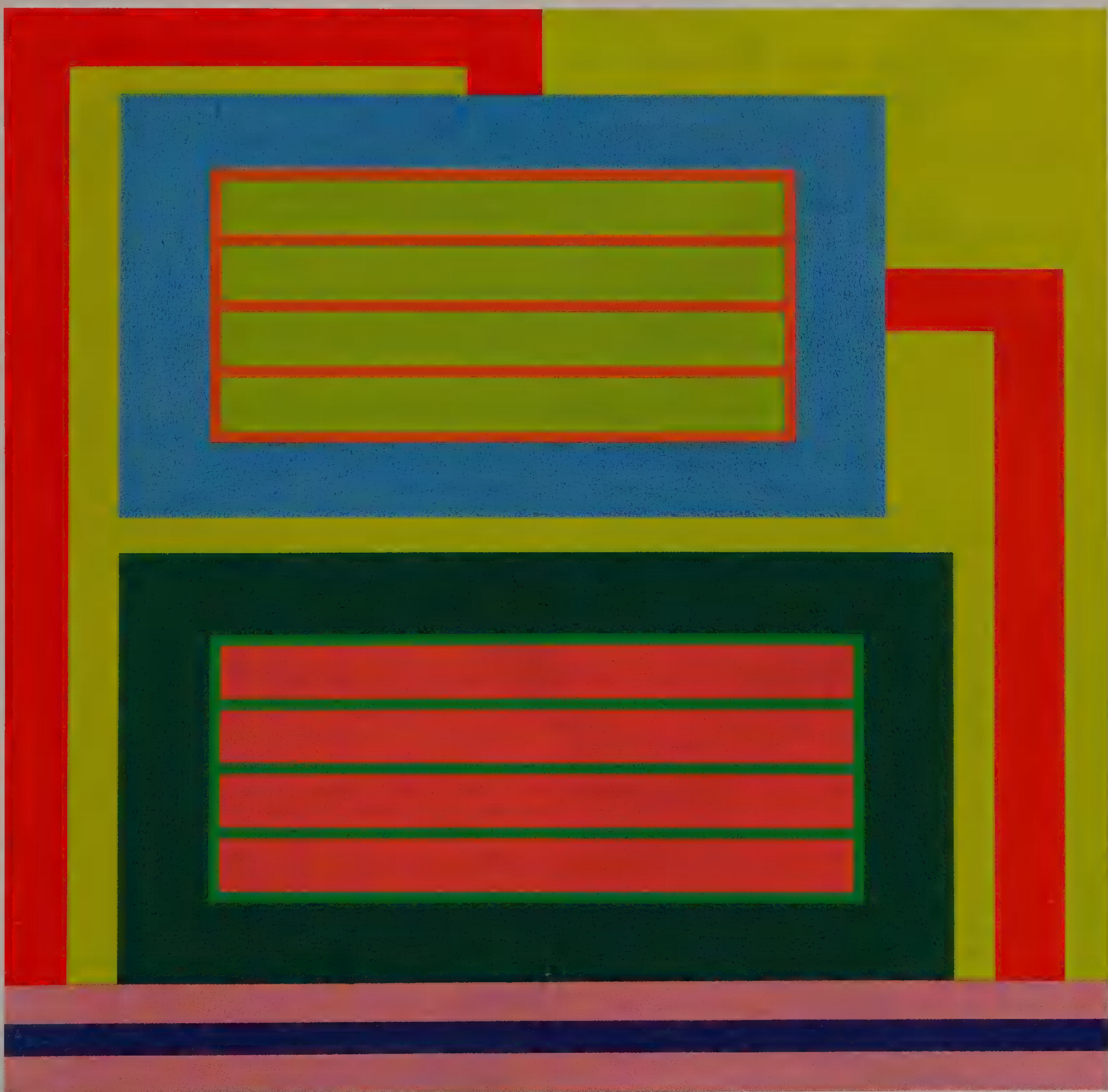
wallpaper, without ever quite resolving into regularity.

In the 1970s, some American artists, like Kim MacConnel, looked to African fabrics as models of laid-back geometry. Today, it is African artists themselves who are winning recognition as brilliant innovators. Take, for example, the abstract tapestries of El Anatsui, on view in a retrospective that runs through August 4 at the Brooklyn Museum. Anatsui's tapestries are put together from hundreds or thousands of pieces of metallic scrap—the caps, bands, wrappers, and labels that adorn the bottles and other items you would find in a market or trash heap in western Africa. The shimmering gold and silver of Anatsui's work offer an image of celebratory splendor. Draped and folded, rather than hung flush against the wall, these tapestries challenge our assumptions about the obligatory flatness of abstraction. Other contemporary abstractionists working with the imagery of fabric and decorative patterning include Linda Besemer, Bernard Frize, Richard Kalina, Ryan McGinness, Beatriz Milhazes, Sean Scully, Frank Stella, Philip Taaffe, and Adriana Varejão.

Architectural structures inform Peter Halley's paintings, as in *Accretive Cognition*, 2010.

5. Architectures

Peter Halley's paintings, which launched the Neo-Geo movement of the 1980s, focus obsessively on the motif of a rectangular cell, reminiscent of a house, a prison, a computer chip, or a piece of machinery. Resting on a narrow band of earth or



flooring, the structure is plugged into its environment by conduits that run through the ground or take to the sky, connecting it into an invisible urban grid. Instead of a place of refuge, the cell becomes a symbol of the postmodern self: isolated, immobilized, and under surveillance. The pure optical quality of 1960s modernism gives way in Halley's work to a purgatory of Day-Glo colors and motel-room textures: garish, menacing, and weirdly seductive. Another painter, Sarah Morris, uses tilted grids and pulsing colors to suggest the dazed confusion found in the mirrored facades of corporate modernism.

In 2013, as in 1913, abstraction is how we think about the future

Whereas Halley and Morris propose large allegorical statements about contemporary society, Rachel Harrison speaks to a realm of personal experience. Her sculptures often incorporate beams, lintels, and moldings embedded in cement or pieces of sheetrock fastened into a loose grid, accompanied by toys, framed photographs, and other household furnishings. The works seem like fragments of houses that have been smashed apart by natural disasters or worn down by everyday life. And yet there's something oddly cheerful about Harrison's eroded architectures, even when they're not painted in the primary-school colors she often favors. They have a kind of pluck, as if they're determined to carry on, no matter what. (In Harrison's most recent work, architecture has mutated into anatomy, as her stacked forms begin to resemble living creatures.)

Architectural structures also play an important role in the abstract work of John Armleder, Frank Badur, Helmut Federle, Liam Gillick, Guillermo Kuitca, Sherrie Levine, David Novros, Doris Salcedo, Andrew Spence, Jessica Stockholder, Sarah Sze, Phoebe Washburn, and Rachel Whiteread.

6. Signs

Signs have been an important element of modern art ever since 1911 and 1912, when Picasso and Braque put stenciled letters and scraps of newspaper into their Cubist pictures. But Jasper Johns's flag, map, and number pictures of the 1950s and early 1960s initiated a revolutionary transformation in the character of sign painting. His stenciled letters and regular grids came to convey meaninglessness instead of meaning. They didn't express emotion; they repressed it. In one way or another, his work lies behind much of the most important art of 1960s, from the monochromes of Frank Stella and Brice Marden to the Minimal boxes of Robert Morris and Donald Judd.

Fifty years later, Johns continues to exercise a decisive influence on abstraction. Wade Guyton, shown last year at the Whitney, updates Johns's number paintings, eliminating the artist's hand by using digital printers instead of stencils. Guyton's insistent X's seem less like marks than like cancellations, refusing to signify and then fading into blankness.

Mark Bradford's paintings resemble the giant computer screens that sophisticated police departments use for real-time surveillance of traffic, crime, and accidents, with data overlaid on urban grids. But in contrast to the flickering pixels of the computer screen, Bradford's images have actual substance. Like Calame, he works with papers and materials gathered from the streets of Los Angeles, shredding and aging them, then layering them into his compositions. Bradford's powerful combination of imagery and materials captures the experience of living simultaneously in the parallel universes of information and sensation.

Other artists using written language or formats recalling maps and diagrams include Ai Weiwei, Mel Bochner, David Diao, Caio Fonseca, Carmela Gross, Gu Wenda, Jenny Holzer, Wosene Worke Kosrof, Glenn Ligon, Tatsuo Miyajima, RETNA, Joan Snyder, Xu Bing, Stephen Westfall, Terry Winters, and Hossein Zendoroudi. Written language, in particular, seems to have an international potency.

Ultimately, the evolution of abstract art—like the evolution of modern art more broadly—has been a series of responses to the experience of life in the 20th and 21st centuries. As Halley argues in a brilliant 1991 essay, abstraction before World War II was largely inspired by the utopian belief that rational technocracy (i.e., socialism) would create a better world. The technocratic ideal found its most powerful symbol not in the rosy-cheeked workers of Socialist Realism but in geometric abstraction. After the devastation of World War II and the revelation of the horrors of Stalinist Russia, geometry could no longer function as an image of utopia. Changing polarity, it became instead a symbol of alienation.

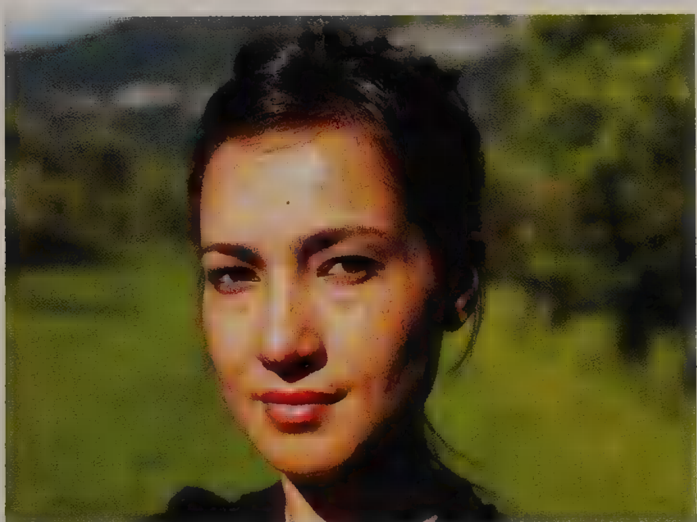
Much contemporary art—not to mention fiction, film, and television—reflects a *Blade Runner* vision of a world, in which the individual is rendered powerless by anonymous government agencies, giant corporations, and deafening mass culture. It's useful to remember that this nightmare vision is itself a romantic stereotype, ignoring the positive aspects of postmodern society. Since 1980, the number of people living in extreme poverty has declined dramatically, both as a percentage of world population and in absolute numbers. The principal reason is the globalization of the economy, which has created millions of factory jobs in the former Third World, lifting workers from starvation in the countryside to subsistence in the cities. Some of the most exciting abstract artists today are those, like Anatsui and Mehretu, whose work responds to this transformation, either by reinventing traditional arts for a global art world or by creating visual allegories of social change that carry us beyond the old capitalism-socialism divide. In 2013, as in 1913, abstraction is how we think about the future. ■

OPPOSITE In *Untitled*, 2010, Wade Guyton updates abstraction, eliminating the artist's hand by using digital printers instead of stencils.

MAXIMALIST MINIATURES

Shahzia Sikander's hybrid, hypnotic works are inspired by her study of manuscript illuminations in her native Pakistan and elsewhere

BY HILARIE M. SHEETS



Shahzia Sikander: Her imagery crosses boundaries of geography, religion, and style.

A murky black rectangle glistens and undulates on the screen of Shahzia Sikander's laptop as the artist shows a visitor to her New York studio a passage from her animation in progress.

Gradually, the field seems to disintegrate into a dense accumulation of irregular black marks that vanish one by one. Viewers familiar with Sikander's work may recognize that these seemingly abstract black shapes are in fact precise renderings of the stylized hairdo of the Gopi women—worshippers of the Hindu god Krishna, whom Sikander often depicted in her miniature paintings from the 1990s. The hairdos have reappeared, disembodied, in many of the animations that set her repertoire of painted imagery in motion, including *SpiNN* (2003), in which the hair rises from the women's disappearing bodies and takes flight in a menacing swarm that invades an imperial Mughal court.

"I found the hair had this wonderful silhouette that, if you turned it around, could look like bats or birds—that was a very exciting moment in animation for me," says Sikander. She used this silhouette to create the floating, oily ground in the large-scale projection she was preparing for the Sharjah Biennial in the United Arab Emirates (on view through May 13).

Women's coiffures, transformed into black birds, invade a Mughal court in the video animation *SpiNN*, 2003.

"I'm still going to the same image but trying to find another way to transform it. I'm not trying to hide where they come from," she says of the hair shapes, "but they need not be associated with their source. I'm interested conceptually in the distance between the translation and the original."

All of Sikander's works, from her small drawings to her room-scale painting installations to her giant animated videos, stem from her study of traditional Indian and Persian miniature painting in her native Pakistan in the late 1980s. "It was a very independent choice—of examining a style, school, genre, and developing a relationship, a language, a dialogue with it," says Sikander, who was attracted to the seductive beauty of the stylized gemlike miniatures and fascinated by the insularity and seeming immunity to translation of the forms.

Since moving to the United States in 1992, Sikander, 44, has been exploring ways to stretch and pull apart the vocabulary of miniature painting in different media and at different scales, creating a hybrid imagery that blurs such polarities as Hindu and Muslim, traditional and contemporary, East and West, representation and abstraction. Fundamental to the work is the fluidity with which Sikander shifts perception and challenges our ways of seeing.

In the 2004 animation *Pursuit Curve*, for instance, a large flowerlike form starts to agitate and break apart, its fluttering reddish parts evoking insects or feathers. Gradually the shapes settle as turbans on a cluster of bearded men. "It's an image which is already loaded," says Sikander of the turbans. "It's masculine. It's got race and religion. When it's flapping around, it's like butterflies and fragile, and then it fits on and all you see is turban. I like that there are multiple reads and facets to a situation, and that the dissociation can be that stark."

"Shahzia mixes history, personal feelings and experiences, and very contemporary art making—firing on all cylinders at the same time—in her masterfully crafted works," says Ian Berry, director of the Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery in Saratoga Springs, New York, who in 2004 organized a large survey of her work there that traveled to the Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum in Connecticut. "The artwork can respond to people's

Hilarie M. Sheets is a contributing editor of ARTnews.

desires to think about politics and biography, not just of Shahzia's but of their own. And then other people can come to it and respond entirely to line, form, color, movement, and perspective, and the creative things Shahzia brings to that."

The Tang is one of many museums to host solo exhibitions, including the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington, D.C., in 1999. Sikander was awarded a MacArthur Foundation Fellowship in 2006. Today, she is represented by Sikkema Jenkins & Co. in New York, where her works sell for up to $125,000.

Sikander grew up in Lahore, in a house adjoining those of her grandfather and aunts and uncles. "I have a very supportive and educated family with strong women—writers, academics, human-rights activists," she says. She always drew as a child and happily did all the diagrams for her cousins' science homework. (The nuns at her Catholic school kept some of her illuminated notebooks.) Her parents encouraged her to apply to the National College of Arts.

There, in 1988, Sikander attended a lecture on miniature paintings given by a visiting curator from the Victoria and Albert Museum, an experience she describes as life changing. Familiar only with the kitschy creations sold to tourists, she was stunned by the "immense range and visual connections" of the images shown by the lecturer. "I felt potential," she says.

Her idea was to explore personal imagery within the thematic guise of miniature painting, at a time when young people in Pakistan, under Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq's military regime, had to behave very discreetly in public. She made the decision to major in miniature painting, working with only one other student under the strict methodology of the master teacher.

"It was a big thing to say, 'I'm going to embrace something that's already saddled with technique and ritual and a kind of copying and a certain language,'" says Sikander, who had to spend an entire year working just in ink before she was allowed to use color.

"I submitted myself to that," she says. For four years she worked 18-hour days, almost always alone, to master the art of traditional miniature painting, learning how to apply layers of paint to build up luminous surfaces. Her final piece was *The Scroll* (1991–92), about a foot high and more than five feet long, in which she mapped out the rooms in her family home, using the genre conventions of stacking flattened-out spaces, and embellishing the architecture and the borders of the piece with painstaking pattern and detail. "You had to play by those rules," Sikander says.

A recurring figure in the scroll is a young woman with long black hair, dressed in white, always painted from behind so that her face is not visible. She passes almost like an apparition through rooms filled with activity. At the end, she is seen at an easel painting herself. "She is an observer, who is not necessarily comfortable in that space," says Sikander. "I left soon after."

In 1992, after graduating, Sikander was invited to install her paintings for one day at the Pakistan Embassy in Washington, D.C. She flew on a standby ticket, carrying her miniature paintings in her suitcase, and decided to

A white-clad female figure passes through the rooms of Sikander's family home in *The Scroll* (detail), 1991–92.

Provenance the Invisible Hand, 2009, was made for an installation of objects Sikander selected from the collection of the Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum.

stay. Paintings in tow, she toured graduate schools all over the country, and in 1993, she enrolled at the Rhode Island School of Design in Providence.

At RISD, Sikander explored a new kind of freedom and simplification in her work. "I felt the work should be more about drawing," she says. She experimented with quick gestures in ink on tissue paper and followed the suggestions that arose from the marks. Out of that process she developed a vocabulary of images, including a silhouette of a female body without head or arms, with tendrils flowing from her legs.

"It was about a form afloat and uprooted," says Sikander, who felt a kinship with Ana Mendieta's bodyworks. Her signature nomadic silhouette has reappeared in many finished works, sometimes like a specter feminizing the head of a Mughal courtier, sometimes joined with the multi-armed Hindu goddess brandishing an array of weapons and wearing a veil, like a cross-cultural female superhero.

After graduating from RISD in 1995, Sikander spent two years in the Core Residency Program at the Glassell School of Art in Houston. There she began to play with radical shifts of scale. "It was breaking out of the preciousness around my process and testing the viability of a form," she says of enlarging an image from ten inches to ten feet, and "seeing whether it gains more momentum or maybe becomes more confrontational."

Sikander's breakout came in 1997, when she moved to New York and her paintings were shown at the Drawing Center and in the Whitney Biennial. "It was a really interesting time in the U.S. for me, before September 11, when things were looking outward more," she says.

During the next few years she received a flurry of invitations to do site-specific work around the country. At the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in San Francisco, she worked alongside Barry McGee and Margaret Kilgallen on her own huge ephemeral mural, which absorbed some of those artists' street-art practices. At various places, including the Contemporary Art Museum Saint Louis in 1998 and the Cleveland Center for Contemporary Art in 2001,

An officer of the East India Company appears in a Mughal court in a still from the HD video animation *The Last Post*, 2010.

she moved her wall installations into three dimensions by hanging layers of translucent tissue paper embellished with images, sometimes several feet deep, in front of the mural, thus veiling or blurring its appearance as viewers moved through the space.

"I hate the word, but there was a prevailing 'multiculturalism' going on in the 1990s," she says. "That timing was personally wonderful because there was such a focus on exploring identity." That focus helped bring attention to her paintings early on, but it eventually became a limitation, particularly in the post–September 11 climate, when her work was seen primarily through the lens of her identity as a Pakistani and a Muslim woman.

"I strive for the open-ended," Sikander says. She has an acute understanding of the complex relationship between her homeland and her adopted country, where she has settled with her husband, who is a chemist, and their young son. While Sikander's work isn't overtly political, the instability and flux of her imagery, which often incorporates various kinds of weaponry and martial music, in some way reflects the cultural tensions and misrepresentations between East and West, as well as the potential for transformation.

Sikander made her first animation, a natural extension of her interest in layering, during a 2001 residency at Artpace in San Antonio, Texas. She was working on a miniature painting and decided to scan in Photoshop each change she made to document the metamorphosis of the work. She hung the painting facing its looped animated version, which would perfectly mirror the painting for a fleeting second, in an installation called *Intimacy*.

"The foundation of my animations and all my work is drawing," says Sikander, who continues to generate her projections from scans of drawn imagery. "The computer is storing and allowing me to move the layers around with amazing freedom and flexibility. The digital space really lets me push the movement."

These days, she is caught up in the possibilities of projection as an immersive theater of light and shadow and sound. Currently, her giant projection that evokes the paradox of Shangri La is on view in "Doris Duke's Shangri La: Architecture, Landscape, and Islamic Art" at the Norton Museum of Art in West Palm Beach (through July 14). Last November, her animated video *The Last Post* (2010) filled the courtyard between the Smithsonian American Art Museum and the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C. The piece deals with the British involvement in the opium trade with China.

"I was interested in the colonial lens, and the opium-based trade to China was happening by using India," says Sikander, who collaborated with the Shanghai-born composer Du Yun on the dissonant score melding haunting voices with the sounds of static and explosions. Personally, Sikander has a soft spot for older Pakistani music and cheesy Bollywood songs. In her 2009 video *Bending the Barrels*, a Pakistani military marching band plays those songs interspersed with martial music.

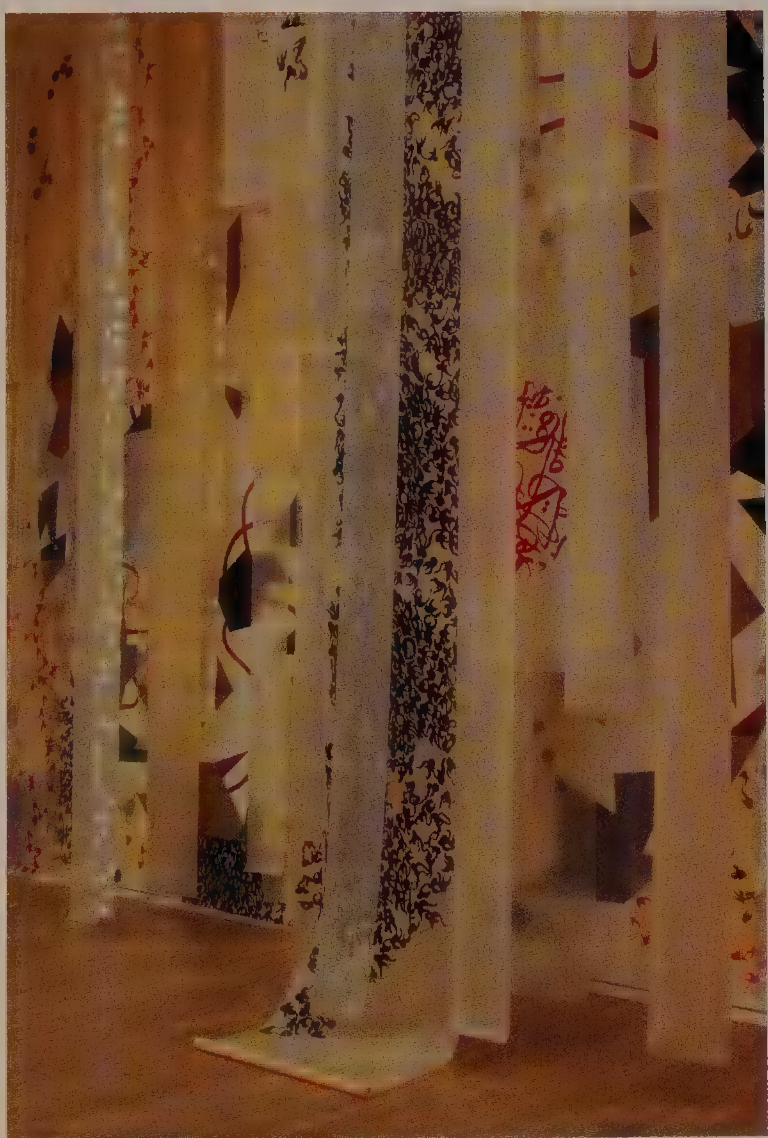
Last November, Sikander was one of five artists (the others were Carrie Mae Weems, Cai Guo-Qiang, Kiki

Smith, and Jeff Koons) to receive the inaugural Medal of Arts from the State Department through its Art in Embassies program. "For me, what they were recognizing was perhaps opening up the perception of the U.S.," says Sikander. She is currently working with the program on a permanent piece for a new embassy under construction in Islamabad.

"The U.S. Embassy in Pakistan is going to be much more of a fortress than in some other countries," the artist says, noting that embassy exhibitions are typically accessible only to the people who can enter the building. "For me, it's a big deal to really push this boundary and make work that is going to be accessible to the outside space and be participatory as well as transparent."

Sikander understands that she will face strong anti-American sentiment when she returns to Pakistan next year to install the piece. "They don't understand why you are choosing to live here," she says. "It can get very personal."

Even as she is constantly expanding the directions taken with her world of imagery, she always returns to the intimate space of the miniature. "To me, the tenacity and simplicity of drawing is really the anchor," she says. "It goes forward and back, sideways and back. I'm very cyclical." ■



ABOVE Icons of female beauty from East and West are interwined in *Maligned Monsters*, a banner for the Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2000.

LEFT *Echo* (detail), three-dimensional wall installation at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Tokyo, 2010.

When Storm Is Collaborator

Personal loss has become subject and challenge for artists hit by disasters like Sandy and Katrina

BY RACHEL WOLFF

Hurricane Sandy struck at an especially fertile moment for Ray Smith and his Brooklyn studio. Smith and his team (a rotating crop of four or so assistants) had been working collaboratively, and their collective voice had just started to emerge. Smith was their leader, their conductor. He established parameters, but the sort of work that was emerging was uniquely its own, something separate from his independent work, which has consisted mainly of folk-art-inflected Neo-Surrealist tableaux.

The studio, which is located in a large 19th-century former icehouse in the Gowanus neighborhood of

The two laminated-plywood sculptures making up Ray Smith's *Mariana*, 2012, floated for hours when the artist's Brooklyn studio was flooded by Sandy.

Brooklyn, was full of work. "Exquisite Corpse" paintings (in-studio takes on the famed parlor game) and collaborative sumi-ink doodles lined the walls. Laminated-plywood sculptures were perched throughout—large, curvy constructions evoking abstract monoliths, tribal totems, and oversize heads. Those too were collaborations, with each participant adding to and amending the pieces at will.

Gowanus was one of several art-rich neighborhoods hit hard by the late October superstorm, along with such postindustrial shorefront enclaves as Red Hook and Dumbo, not to mention the West Chelsea gallery district, which suffered unprecedented damage.

Some seven feet of water threw Smith's studio into upheaval. He was initially despondent as older works were swept up into the Sandy swamp of debris along with these recent collaborations. But friends and colleagues helped him clean up and assess the damage. Soon, given the nature of the work he had been making, it dawned on him: Sandy was ultimately a collaborator too.

"There was all this damage that started happening to certain pieces," Smith says. "In essence, it began to fall back into the sort of temperament of the place. It was giving a patina to the work itself."

During the cleanup, one split and warped wooden sculpture was inadvertently left outside. "The sculpture got covered in bird poop," Smith says. But the new texture, the new patina had an appeal. "It seemed acceptable to me—it gained that look of 'shit happens,' so to speak." So the piece was left outside where the birds went at it even more. It will be included in a show of the studio's contents on view through May 5 at the exhibition space at Mana Contemporary, a high-end art storage facility in Jersey City that gave Smith substantial help in the cleanup. Afterward, he'd like to cast the sculpture in bronze and preserve the unexpected "paint job" forever.

Diana Cooper, *Untitled*, 2012–13, mixed media with digital prints, from her exhibition "My Eye Travels." The show's title pays homage to a work Cooper lost.

COURTESY POSTMASTERS GALLERY, NEW YORK

Several months later, artists in the tristate area have begun to process what Sandy wrought. Dozens lost studios and, because of the extensive damage in Chelsea, hundreds, if not thousands, lost art. For those affected, the loss has manifested itself physically and conceptually in their post-Sandy work and even, in some cases, in their approach to making art in general. Throughout, there seems to be a propensity toward a kind of silver-lining thinking: a lot of artists are taking on personal loss as subject and as challenge.

There is something different and something essential in how artists react to devastating circumstances—how they survey damaged work and gutted studios and then move on. Hurricane Katrina set a precedent in that sense. "We did a study a year after Katrina," says Craig Nutt, director of programs at the Craft Emergency Relief Fund and Artists' Emergency Resources, a national organization that has provided aid to Sandy-affected artists as well. "We asked artists if anything positive had happened as a result of the disaster. Eighty-five percent said yes."

"I think it has a lot to do with the attitude of artists," Nutt adds. "They had made adaptations in their work—they had discovered new imagery from

Rachel Wolff is a New York–based critic, writer, and editor.

the disaster. It also helped them prioritize."

"Artists, more than anyone I know, are capable of making something out of nothing," adds Michael Royce, executive director of the New York Foundation for the Arts (NYFA), which has been a critical resource for artists in the wake of the storm. "That is what they do all their lives. They find things on the street, they beg, they borrow, or they create brand-new colors, brand-new objects, or brand-new ways of looking at the world. They have within them what I would call a resilient spirit that actually infuses everything they do."

Many of the artists affected are still in a state of shock, Royce notes, and most are still writing grant proposals and applying for aid. But "when they come out of that survival mode, many will find a way to make use of the experience in a way that empowers them to go deeper into their work."

Some—like Smith—already have. Diana Cooper's recent solo exhibition at Postmasters Gallery in Chelsea featured a new series of photo-based constructions. The title of the show, "My Eye Travels," pays homage to a work Cooper lost when her storage unit flooded during the storm. The original piece was a mixed-media network of undulating topographies and housing-block-like grids, lying somewhere between a motherboard and a map. Its loss thrust her toward a long-considered move into manipulated photography.

Photography "has a relationship with the ephemeral—things that exist today but not tomorrow," she says. "In a weird way, the Sandy experience gave me more courage to throw myself into that. It made me less fearful of the new."

Other such post-Sandy efforts were on view in February in the NYFA-organized Chelsea exhibition "After Affects." Igor Kopystiansky's *Painting* is a tangled mass of shredded canvas, composed of bits and pieces of the paintings destroyed in the duo's art storage unit. Andrea Burgay's *Woven Threads Drawing Sketchbook* and *Woven Threads Drawing* are mud-and water-stained, quasi-anatomical 2012 sketches altered in the artist's studio during the storm (in the sketchbook, the mud stains form a riblike structure along the binding, adding to the piece's effect). New York photographer Larry Racioppo contributed his images of Queens residents grappling with their own damaged art: an elderly couple disposing of their Sunday paintings, and a man parting with the dollhouse he built for his daughter. Golnar Adili's *Amber* is a photocollage from a journal salvaged from the artist's flooded studio. The piece consists of two portraits of a young Iranian woman cut into strips and spliced together. The patches of desaturated color on and around her (the water caused them to bleed onto another page) seem to glow.

In Melissa Rubin's *Sinking*, 2012, the man-made world is helpless against an attack by both sky and ocean.

Adili, an artist-in-residence at Dumbo's Smack Mellon, was out of town when the storm hit. The nonprofit moved "anything that looked like art" out of harm's way, she says. But they didn't know that the videotapes, books, documents, snapshots, and other ephemera stored in boxes throughout her given space were just as precious, if not more so: they comprised Adili's late father's belongings.

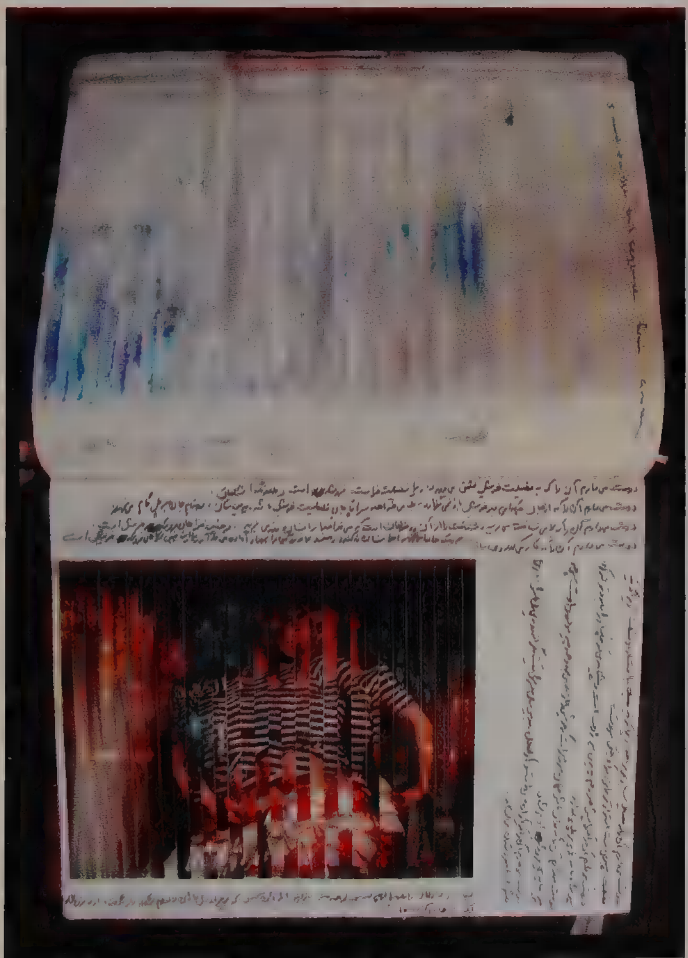
The artist had been sitting on the massive archive for about ten years, since her father's death. "It was too emotional for me—I just wasn't ready," she says. She had just started going through the materials before the storm.

Floodwaters made it seem as if a giant spoon had given the studio a violent stir. But friends came by and salvaged quite a bit. Adili had been cataloguing the archive piece by piece, and suddenly it was all laid bare. "I saw photos and things I had never seen," she

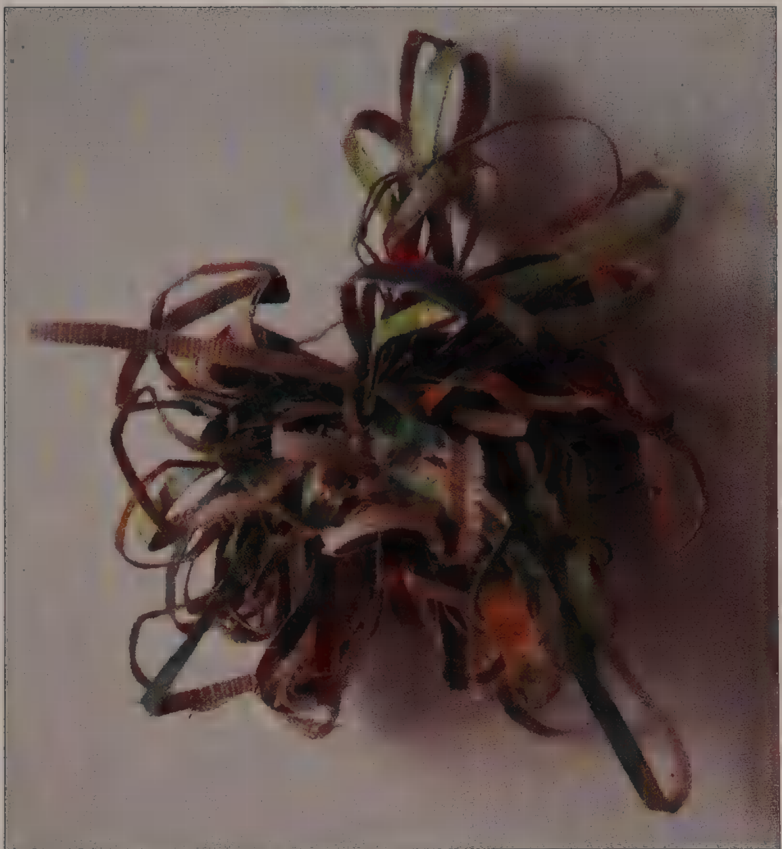
THIS PAGE AND OPPOSITE: COURTESY THE ARTISTS AND NYFA (5)

John Gordon Gauld's *Flooded Bunny*, 2012, was not actually flooded but refers to the inundation.

Larry Racioppo recorded a personal loss: *Bob and the dollhouse he built for his daughter, and used too by his granddaughters, put out for trash pickup*, 2012.



Golnar Adili's *Amber*, 2006, is a photograph from a collage in a journal salvaged from the artist's flooded studio.



Igor Kopystiansky's *Painting*, 2012, from the exhibition "After Affects," is made of shredded canvas from storm-destroyed works.

says, and that would have taken her months, if not years, to see otherwise. "In a way, the flood brought everything together. It gave me so much energy and it made it all so much more urgent."

I was investigating displacement and loss," Adili adds. "This added another layer—it deepened the story." Adili has several exhibitions on the horizon, and she's determined to find a way to integrate these materials and her father's narrative into her craft, which lately has included folding, cutting, and rearranging paper reproductions of her photographs into delicate sculptures.

Like Adili, Brooklyn sculptor Dustin Yellin achieved a level of clarity as the result of his loss, and the events have had an eerie resonance in his work. Yellin makes three-dimensional collages by adorning and then layering dozens of thick glass panes. He's tired, but inspired. The upheaval he witnessed during the storm—which decimated both his studio and his recently christened space, the Intercourse—has stuck with him. He's itching to make art again to process what he's seen.

"Experiencing it was just fantastic," Yellin says. Like others in the area, he chose not to evacuate during Sandy and tried to protect his studio. When that failed, he watched in awe as the water seeped in.

"To see the refrigerator float up and on to its back and open up and the food come out and everything becoming this soup was incredible," he says. "I don't think I'd give that up. I feel lucky to have experienced it. Even though there's so much damage and turmoil and loss that came with it. It's also one of the most exhilarating and visceral memories I'll probably have in my life."

Stacks of glass panels that survived the surge and a few of Yellin's recent works are scattered throughout the Intercourse for safekeeping (his new studio is still under construction), including *The Triptych*, a 12-ton colossus of a piece that I first saw when I came by for a sneak peek at the Intercourse before it opened last year. Today, the piece seems more like a self-fulfilling prophecy. It depicts an apocalyptic underwater hellscape, as man, beast, and everything in between are tossed and toppled by white-capped waves. The chaotic scene (à la Hieronymus Bosch) is spurned by a large sea-witch of sorts, spewing out an inky, oily, all-consuming toxic substance—not unlike Sandy herself. Musicians, scientists, soldiers, and artists are among the crowd.

Christoper Saucedo's *Fluid Container Inventory*, 2011, aluminum on wood, was made after he lost his New Orleans home and studio to Katrina.

It's ironic that the piece appears to have survived the storm intact. Yellin is more determined than ever to continue working in this vein, to make more of "these crazy drowning worlds, this idea of everything going into this deluge."

There is "this kind of dynamic pause, this opportunity to suddenly turn the visual language around in a very specific way," says Dan Cameron, chief curator at the Orange County Museum of Art and founding director of Prospect New Orleans, a sprawling biennial installed throughout the city. Artists, he says, are inclined to embrace disaster, to repurpose it, to give voice to it.

"This is the common philosophy of artists," says Brooklyn-based painter Bosco Sodi. After the storm, the pigments he uses to make his thick, fibrous monochromes stained the walkway surrounding his waterfront studio bright red; nearly a year's worth of work was damaged inside. "Artists know how to do deal with accidents, how to deal with materials, how to deal with complications," he says.

"It's this kind of notion that art may itself be eternal in some way, but life certainly isn't," Cameron adds. "Artists right away want to convey that. You have the

need to make it and the need to see it"—not just from the art community but from the local population.

Few know this urge better than Christopher Saucedo, a New York–based artist who lost his home and studio in Hurricane Katrina and then again during Sandy after having relocated to the Rockaways, the devastated beachfront neighborhood in Queens.

The Arts Council of New Orleans commissioned Saucedo to make a monument to Katrina. The resulting piece features an 8,000-pound slab of granite carved with 1,836 waves to memorialize the dead, and rests on the kind of sturdy wooden rollers used to move construction materials in earlier days. The stone had been underwater during Katrina too.

"I had had it for a very long time," Saucedo says. "It was such a beautiful thing, I was always afraid to use it, afraid that whatever I did would not be worthy of that stone. After Katrina, I had this newfound courage. Had it not happened, I imagine it would still be sitting in my yard, and I'd still be waiting for the subject to appear."

But perhaps the most poignant examples of Saucedo's storm-spurred output are several pieces that came out of a discovery the artist made while surveying the damage in his New Orleans home. A cabinet had survived the surge intact and the glasses inside were full to the brim with Katrina floodwater. He photographed the vessels and saved the water in a separate container. The imagery from this odd found memorial recently made its way into Saucedo's work. He rendered the glasses on the ends of cattle-branding devices and burned their images onto black-and-white photographs of his brother, a firefighter, whom he lost on September 11, 2001. He also branded these containers into a floating composition on a wood panel and, in another piece, rendered them with thin strips of aluminum. The work was shown in September 2011 at the cooperatively run Good Children Gallery in New Orleans, which itself was a storm by-product.

Saucedo and his family were evacuated to Houston during the storm, "so there was this emptiness of not knowing what happened firsthand in Katrina," he says. "These glasses of water were residue; they were clues left behind."

The branded-wood piece was underwater during Sandy, and Saucedo doused it with Red Cross–supplied bleach to stave off mold, then branded it yet again. "It allowed me to make something richer," he says of the piece, which now has a more expressive look of a relic. "A full-on crisis removes any reluctance or cautious hesitancy in experimentation."

Plus, he adds, "the provenance keeps me closer to the work. Both the work and I survived the storm. We are linked." ■

***Flood Marker*, 2007, is Saucedo's monument to the hurricane. The granite slab is carved with 1,836 waves to memorialize the dead.**

The Woman Behind Cleopatra

The grotesque figure on the back of Michelangelo's famous Cleopatra drawing reveals an intimate story

BY WILLIAM E. WALLACE

This is a truly hideous drawing. Fat lips, a gaping mouth, buckteeth. Look at those eyes: the tentatively indicated right pupil is misplaced, and the left is an android-like bore-hole. This cannot possibly be a drawing by Michelangelo. Why has the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, elected to include it in an exhibition of masterworks?

The reason becomes clear on the opposite side of the sheet. There we find the justifiably famous idealized head of a woman, traditionally identified as Cleopatra because of the snake encircling her breast and fastening its venomous bite on the left nipple.

This inept chalk drawing of a woman may have been the work of Michelangelo's young friend and admirer Tommaso de' Cavalieri.

Michelangelo presented the beautifully finished drawing of Cleopatra to his new friend and admirer, the Roman nobleman Tommaso de' Cavalieri, in 1532. It is now one of the highlights of the Casa Buonarroti, the

William E. Wallace is Barbara Murphy Bryant Distinguished Professor of Art History at Washington University in Saint Louis. His most recent book is Michelangelo: The Artist, the Man, and His Times *(Cambridge University Press, 2011).*

COURTESY MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, BOSTON/CASA BUONARROTI, FLORENCE, INV. 2F/ORGANIZED BY MUSARELLE MUSEUM OF ART AT THE COLLEGE OF WILLIAM AND MARY, WILLIAMSBURG, VIRGINIA

Michelangelo turned over the sheet and drew an imaginary portrait of Cleopatra, perhaps as a lesson to Cavalieri.

house museum bequeathed by Michelangelo's heirs to the city of Florence in the mid-19th century, and is included in the exhibition "Michelangelo: Sacred and Profane, Master Drawings from the Casa Buonarroti" (April 21–June 30). Given the exceptional beauty of the drawing, one wonders how and why a weak and unappealing scrawl came to defile it? How do we explain the discrepancy in quality between the two sides of this sheet?

Despite the beauty of the Cleopatra, many earlier critics—including such distinguished connoisseurs as Bernard Berenson, Luitpold Dussler, and Frederick Hartt—rejected its attribution to Michelangelo. Berenson, for example, was put off by the degree of finish, writing that "the highly elaborated, smoothly finished design is likely to be either a failure or an absurdity." Even when scholars accepted the sheet as autograph, they often found fault, especially with the peculiarly bulbous breast and the flat delineation of the masticating snake.

But the sheet has an impeccable and unbroken provenance, which is extremely unusual for a drawing. Now visitors to the Boston exhibition have a rare opportunity to judge it in person.

Michelangelo wielded the broad edge of his black chalk to exploit the natural texture, or "tooth," of the paper, thereby creating the silken sheen and swarthy complexion appropriate to the queen of ancient Egypt. Precise contours describe the head and elegantly long neck, the soft sensuous lips, the saddened distant eyes, and an extravagant headpiece from which escape fluttering tendrils and a long tight braid. Cleopatra exudes an air of dreamy serenity: wistful, longing, silent, despite the slight parting of tremulous lips.

ABOVE ***Study for the Head of the Madonna for the "Doni Tondo."*** **LEFT** ***Study for the Porta Pia in Rome.***

This masterpiece of the draftsman's art is a finely finished miniature painting, much admired by Michelangelo's biographer, Giorgio Vasari, who considered the Cleopatra a stupendous drawing ("una carta stupendissima"). No wonder that Michelangelo's contemporaries praised such finely finished drawings as "perfectly painted" ("perfettamente dipinta"). The praise, however, makes it even more difficult to explain the grotesque, gorgon-like figure on the verso.

This figure was revealed when a thick backing sheet was removed in 1988. Scholars had long been aware of the presence of a drawing on the verso, but it was extremely difficult to discern, even when the Cleopatra was held up to the light. The revelation of a "new" work by Michelangelo was greeted with fanfare, but its inferior quality proved difficult to explain. Describing the drawing as a more "tormented" Cleopatra does little to justify its unsightly character and inarticulate draftsmanship.

Substandard sketches are present on the reverse sides of Michelangelo drawings on a number of similar sheets. These drawings are a byproduct of the artist's patient if desultory pedagogical efforts. Occasionally Michelangelo used the same sheet on which a pupil had been practicing in order to demonstrate good drawing or "buon disegno." Thus the sequence of creation was just the opposite of what is implied by our arbitrary designations of "recto" (front) and "verso" (reverse). In these pedagogical drawings, the so-called verso was drawn first, followed by the finished drawing on the opposite side, now called the recto merely because it is the finest drawing on a sheet.

***Madonna col Bambino*, ca. 1525, a powerful evocation of the sacred.**

So who is the inept draftsman of the Cleopatra verso, the first drawing on this otherwise magnificent sheet? I would suggest Tommaso de' Cavalieri, the young man to whom Michelangelo offered drawing lessons and who was the first owner of the Cleopatra.

Michelangelo met Cavalieri in Rome toward the end of 1532. By all accounts, Cavalieri was extremely handsome, endowed with exquisite manners, physical grace, and a sensitive personality. Despite the difference in age and in social standing (Cavalieri was from a noble Roman family), the two experienced an instant mutual attraction and enjoyed a close friendship that lasted more than 30 years. And how did an old man (Michelangelo was considered old at 57) express his feelings for the admiring youth? With long, gushing letters, poetry, days spent looking at art together, and an offer to teach the young man drawing.

Cavalieri tried his hand by drawing the figure on the verso. Not yet a Cleopatra, the head may have been inspired by an antique sculpture that the two friends inspected together, such as the famous *Sleeping Ariadne* in the Belvedere Court of the Vatican. Or it may have been inspired by Giovanni Boccaccio's *Famous Women*: is this Agrippina, the grieving wife of Germanicus, or the Carthaginian Queen Sofonisba just after draining the fateful cup of poison? However, Cavalieri's halting effort fell short of its classical inspiration (the display of teeth had especially negative connotations). To demonstrate "buon disegno," Michelangelo reversed the sheet and performed a miracle of artistic alchemy: ugliness became beauty, harrowing but unbecoming emotion became serene resignation, an indecorous head was transformed into a doomed Cleopatra. We are privileged witnesses of Michelangelo turning base matter into gold.

Cavalieri kept the Cleopatra for 30 years before he was constrained to donate it to Duke Cosimo de' Medici in 1562. In the accompanying letter, Cavalieri lamented that giving up his treasured possession was no less painful than losing a child. ■

'NYC 1993: Experimental Jet Set, Trash and No Star'

New Museum

Through May 26

In 1993, the New York art scene was in the throes of change, the result of an economic downturn that caused dozens of galleries to close, and an AIDS crisis that spurred fervent political activism. The 1993 Whitney Biennial captured some of this urgency, but with so much art activity taking place on the streets, in clubs, in alternative spaces, and even in artists' apartments, there was just too much to be contained in one museum. Such is also a problem with this show. It has taken an institutional approach to an anti-institutional period. The curators—Massimiliano Gioni, Gary Carrion-Murayari, Jenny Moore, and Margot Norton—too young to have experienced this turning point firsthand, focused on artworks that were shown in galleries and museums, leaving more impromptu efforts out of the equation.

Nevertheless, there is a lot to see and appreciate, especially the wide range of projects exploring political identity. Shockingly outspoken are Pepón Osorio's *Scene of the Crime (Whose Crime?)*, a full-scale reconstruction of an uber–Puerto Rican family's living room with a bloody corpse in the center; Nicole Eisenman's *Hanging Birth* (1993), a monochrome canvas of a woman being hung as her child is born; and Sue Williams's painting *Are You*

Felix Gonzalez-Torres, *Untitled (Couple)*, 1993, lightbulbs, porcelain light sockets, and extension cords, installation view.

Pepón Osorio, *Scene of the Crime (Whose Crime?)*, 1993, mixed media, installation view.

Janine Antoni, *Lick and Lather*, 1993, chocolate and soap, installation view.

Pro-Porn or Anti-Porn? (1992), demonstrating what a bold artist she once was.

And there is much pathos here. The Felix Gonzalez-Torres installation is particularly moving: his string of bare lightbulbs, titled *Untitled (Couple)*, 1993, falls from the ceiling in front of his mural of birds flying in a cloudy sky. Frank Moore, who also died of AIDS, is represented with *Birth of Venus* (1993), a surrealistic vision of a blond, pink woman on a garbage-strewn beach. There are bad boys too for us to mourn; Mike Kelley has a series of "Garbage Drawings" (1988), black-and-white cartoony piles of poop near Jason Rhoades's *Garage Renovation New York (Cherry Makita)*, 1993, an object structure containing a drill hooked up to a truck motor, all surrounded by tin-foil-covered objects.

Several artists achieved their best work in 1993 at the beginning of their careers. Matthew Barney's film loop *DRAWING RESTRAINT 7* (1993) shows three satyrs, including the costumed artist, wrestling in a bright blue room, and Janine Antoni's chocolate and soap self-portrait busts *Lick and Lather* (1993) employ modest techniques that sometimes overshadow the artists' later, more elaborate productions. Nothing can match the perverse effect of Charles Ray's *Family Romance* (1992-93), composed of lifelike mannequins in which father, mother, son, and baby are all the same size.

Still, there are many artists whose careers deserve to be revisited. Alex Bag predicts the age of Facebook and blogs with her narcissistic videos and Kathe Burkhart provides humor with her caricature of Liz Taylor. Lutz Bacher's video sculpture *My Penis* (1992) takes a clip of testimony from William Kennedy Smith's rape trial, repeating it until it becomes an emasculated mantra. Likewise, Ida Applebroog anticipates the Catholic Church's child-abuse scandals with her painting *Kathy W* (1992) of children sitting on Santa's lap.

It is nice to remember that all of this work was made at the bottom of the market for contemporary art, when Rirkrit Tiravanija cooked his first meal in a gallery and Nari Ward could fill an abandoned fire station with 300 baby strollers. ***—Barbara Pollack***

UP NOW

Nayland Blake

Matthew Marks
Through April 19

Brooklyn artist Nayland Blake, who collects his materials during his daily "wanderings" and integrates them into harmonious installations, has been described as a modern-day flaneur. His mixed-media works are rooted in and derived from his personal history, and although they often make provocative references to his pan-sexuality, his propensity for masochism, and his biracial heritage, they are always imbued with a tenderly nostalgic light. The six sculptures in this show, titled "What Wont Wreng" [sic], all from 2013, are no exception. Taken together, they offer a seemingly narrative, even chronological, progression, through which the artist explores the evolution of his own identity.

The story begins with *Heritage*, a large, vintage ink-jet print repeated across a long piece of particleboard. The hazy, yellowed image is banal, depicting an elderly couple on a suburban golf course, and suggesting that Blake's ancestral legacy is perfectly unexceptional. But in the sculptural assemblage *Oh*, which appears to leap backward into the artist's youth, normalcy yields to turmoil. A child-size stool supports a red wooden construction recalling a flag—that universal symbol of discovery and belonging. In the place of Old Glory's iconic stars and stripes, however, the chipped wood has gaping star-shaped holes: an American dream disfigured. *Buddy Buddy Buddy*, a tall glass box that evokes seamy peep shows, conjures Blake's teenage angst. Hanging against a mirrored wall inside the box, hundreds of toy figurines and stuffed animals—the superheroes of his adolescence—are reflected in a self-conscious landscape of unattainable plastic perfection and uneasy sexuality.

The remaining works take us quickly through the artist's coming of age, playfully pulling motifs from the culture of gay communities and culminating in the sculpture *Eleventh*, another Plexiglas booth. Plastered to its side, an oversize image of Blake stares out boldly from an advertisement for a leather bar. Arms crossed, lips curled in a grin, chest fitted with studded straps, he is unrepentant, finally, in asserting himself.

—*Emily Nathan*

ABOVE Nayland Blake, *Oh*, 2013, wood, felt, Plexiglas, wire, glass beads, and paint, 69½" x 24" x 22". LEFT *Eleventh*, 2013, particleboard, fabric, metal, vinyl, paper, Plexiglas, glass, Crisco, and ink-jet on vinyl, 77" x 36½" x 18½".

'Nude Descending a Staircase: An Homage'

Francis M. Naumann Fine Art

This show celebrated the presence of Duchamp's notorious painting in the Armory Show of 1913. The Naumann tribute opened on February 15, a century after the original Armory Show. The real question is, what sort of homage did the contemporary artists here pay to Duchamp's masterpiece 100 years after the fact?

If imitation is the highest form of flattery, Mike Bidlo is quite a flatterer. Known for his "not by" paintings that replicate Warhols or Pollocks, for example, Bidlo here created four riffs on Duchamp in pencil and gouache. Sherrie Levine, on the other hand, did an *After Duchamp 1–18* (2012) consisting of 18 postcards mounted on mat board, which allude to Duchamp's 1937 pochoir colored collotypes, postcard-size reproductions signed by the artist and sold simultaneously as originals. Is Levine, as a woman, perpetrating an appropriation of Duchamp in order to replace him?

ARTnews contributor Elisabeth Kley's *Exquisite Nude*, a 2012 ink-and-pencil drawing on paper, contrives a sparagmos or scattering of the limbs on Duchamp's nude, alluding simultaneously to the Surrealist game "exquisite corpse" and Duchamp's *Étant donnés* (1946–1966), with its mutilated female body as seen through a peephole. Is Kley taking revenge on Duchamp for the violence of his image?

Elisabeth Kley, *Exquisite Nude*, 2012, ink and pencil on paper, 24" x 18". Francis M. Naumann Fine Art.

The works of Levine and Kley were juxtaposed here with Mel Ramos's 1987 watercolor on paper *Nude Descending a Staircase*, a "cheesecake" image of a sexy blonde presented full-frontally, transforming Duchamp's sexless figure into a sex object. Ramos simply makes explicit what Kley and Levine suggest, that Duchamp was just another male artist exploiting the female body. Perhaps the closest work to a true homage in this enigmatic show is Joseph Kosuth's *An Elementary Parallelism*, a neon construction from 2013: Duchamp's composition is reduced to geometric diagrams whose bright white light dazzles us almost as much as Duchamp's nude did the Armory spectators in 1913.

—*Alfred Mac Adam*

Hosook Kang, *Lake*, 2010, acrylic on canvas, 76½" x 102". Sundaram Tagore.

Hosook Kang

Sundaram Tagore

Korean artist Hosook Kang is fascinated with nature, specifically the invisible rush of energy that flows through living things and natural phenomena. This is in keeping with an ink-painting tradition in which the brushwork is used to express the life force known as "chi." For the works on view here, the artist used acrylic paint on canvas rather than ink on rice paper, and made full use of a wild spectrum of color.

In *Lake* (2010), Kang captures the movement and color range of Monet's "Water Lilies" by applying tiny dabs of color in the shape of diamonds as on a rattlesnake's skin. From a distance, the brushstrokes blend into a swirl of saturated hues, with yellows, whites, pinks, and blues shimmering over the mirrorlike expanse of the water's surface. In *Beyond Blue* (2011), the artist shifts her focus to the cosmos, and her sparks of light look like orange and blue nebulae hovering in a dark blue solar system. There is a terrific tension here between her bright twinkling dots and a background that is hazy and blurry.

Sometimes Kang exercises more restraint in her color palette, allowing the central forms embedded in her work to emerge more clearly. For example, *Build 2* (2011) looks like a painting of a giant chandelier, a mass of white lights giving

off a sprinkling of prismatic spots of blue, orange, and purple. This work is quite magical, but unfortunately, when too many of Kang's works are grouped together, individual paintings lose their power. The brush becomes more of a gimmick, or a crutch, trapping Kang into one singular effect rather than liberating her to try new approaches to her various subjects. *—Barbara Pollack*

Francisco Leiro

Marlborough

Spanish artist Francisco Leiro uses various types of wood to create his strong, disconcerting, yet affecting human figures, often endowed with a strange tinge of surrealism and a dignified sense of resignation.

The show of some 20 sculptures included freestanding carved figures, pedestal works, and wall pieces. Several larger-than-life characters were so skillfully depicted as experiencing a variety of existential struggles that they readily elicited the viewer's empathy.

Exposed (2011) is a polychromed chestnut-wood sculpture over six feet tall of a man with one foot on a stool, tying an invisible shoelace. Seeming distracted or startled, he is mysteriously wearing two masks—one resting on his shoulder, the other atop his head and staring upward. These masks, looking very much like the man's own face, appear poised to conceal or protect him, or simply provide a physical barrier to the outside world, if necessary.

Carmen Cicero, *The Bookkeeper*, 1998, acrylic on canvas, 54" x 72". June Kelly.

In another work, titled *Calafateador* (2010), a cedar-wood figure sits balanced on the edge of a stool, the figure's surface covered in saw marks, tree rings, and chip patterns, as if to suggest aging and the ravages of the elements. The man is partially blinded by boxy forms on each side of his head, rendering him like a mythological being, but he seems comfortable with his fate.

All of the works in the show were rich with narrative potential. One wall-relief carving titled *Molotov Cocktail* (2011) portrays an anguished, twisted, sooty, half-burnt nude male figure on the verge of throwing a flaming red torch-like object. He is breaking out of the wooden frame that constrains him, in a fierce act of unambiguous rebellion. *—Doug McClemont*

Francisco Leiro, *Calafateador*, 2010, cedar wood, 46⅛" x 18⅛" x 12⅝". Marlborough.

Carmen Cicero

June Kelly

Carmen Cicero's haunting show of landscapes conjured a world of mysterious visions. Painted in a naive, Rousseau-like style that belies the artist's early career as an Abstract Expressionist, the canvases were by turns magical and disquieting. In one, a giant white owl glides low over a country road, his pale yellow eyes staring straight at the viewer. In another, the entrance to a Beaux-Arts subway station stands incongruously in a golden field at the edge of the woods. One of the most poignant pieces was a dusky, New England snow scene depicting a fox darting up a silvery road, while a Renaissance-style Virgin, standing like a paper cutout among the drifts, gestures to the animal, as if offering a benediction.

The paintings evoked eerie silences and half-formed questions. The black locomotive in *Engine 611* (2004) sits by itself, like a northern mirage, in a landscape blanketed in snow, with no rails to travel on. The stiffly rendered figures, subtly skewed perspectives, and ominous shadows in these works appeared to suggest dioramas, Mexican votive paintings, and sometimes, noir novels. Often a cold, white moon hangs on the horizon.

In *Ruisdael Enigma* (2004), a man in a trench coat strides through a dreary winter-scape while the moon peers through sinister clouds. In *The Bookkeeper* (1998), a car has stopped on a deserted country road. A man in a fedora and yellow coat sits inside, illuminated by the ghostly light of the dashboard. In the distance, the moon shines like a searchlight. Where did he come from, and where was he going? Such questions seem to hover over Cicero's dreamscapes, making his images hard to forget. *—Mona Molarsky*

Sharon Lockhart/ Noa Eshkol

Jewish Museum

Sharon Lockhart has built her career on close, anthropological studies of ostensibly unremarkable subjects. Her meticulously focused photographs and films feature workmen on lunch break, children with sports equipment, musicians tuning instruments—functioning at once as documents and as living portraits that bring to life the quotidian moments they record. Her latest body of work, which debuted at the Israel Museum and then traveled to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art before arriving in New York, engaged and revivified the legacy of the late Israeli choreographer, theorist, and artist Noa Eshkol, posthumously casting her as the work's coauthor as well as its subject.

Supported by a host of supplementary materials including Eshkol's drawings, notebooks, and textiles, known as "wall carpets," Lockhart's multichannel film installation *Five Dances and Nine Wall Carpets by Noa Eshkol* (2011) anchored the show. Projected onto five freestanding boxes arranged throughout a darkened gallery, several seemingly life-size figures performed the choreographer's dances to the mechanical ticking of a metronome. Eshkol is best known for a system she created in the 1950s with architect Avraham Wachman, the Eshkol-Wachman Movement Notation, which breaks down the body into a series of spatial relationships that can be charted through symbols and numbers. Lockhart drew the tightly synched, modestly scaled movements in her film from Eshkol's "scores," and staged the dances in spare, gray rooms amid a selection of wall carpets mounted on vertical stands, like a silent audience. Reviving archival material, the work translated Eshkol's history into a new, active present.

In an upstairs gallery, Lockhart displayed three of the textiles on horizontal plinths, as though they were Minimalist sculptures. Stitched together by Eshkol's friends, according to her designs, from pieces of common material—army blankets, umbrellas, linens—they weave happenstance and artistic intention into eclectic, timeless composites, culled from the most basic, universal stuff of human life. —***Emily Nathan***

Sharon Lockhart, *Five Dances and Nine Wall Carpets by Noa Eshkol*, 2011, production still, dimensions variable. Jewish Museum.

Huma Bhabha

MoMA PS1

The subtitle of this show, "Unnatural Histories," said it all: Huma Bhabha's sculptures are like ancient artifacts from a parallel Earth. Her freaky statues resemble aliens, robots, mythological monsters, or primitive hominids. They are funny and disturbing at once, and like nothing you've seen before.

Styrofoam, drywall, chicken wire, metal gutters, cork, and clay all find their way into the work, as do animal bones, deadwood, leaves, and seedpods. It's the kind of detritus you could find at a landfill in Karachi, Pakistan, where Bhabha was born and raised, or in Poughkeepsie, New York, where she now lives.

Huma Bhabha, *Twins* (detail), 2011, mixed-media sculpture, installation view. MoMA PS1.

The pieces here were made between 2005 and 2012, and while they displayed a continuity of style and materials, they also appear to have loosened up and shed self-consciousness over those years. Older works such as *Sleeper* and *Cargo Tomb* (both 2005) are often explicitly figurative and relatively refined. They bear similarities to antiquities from the Gandhara Kingdom, which straddled modern-day Pakistan and Afghanistan and blended Buddhist, Greek, and Persian traditions.

In later works, Bhabha got more experimental. For *Thot and Scribe* (2012), she spray-painted a comically simple face on wire mesh and assembled a blocky body that resembles a lunar lander. The enigmatic figure is perched on a Plexiglas tower overlooking a mangled drainpipe. Scattered throughout the show are earthen masks with hollowed-out alien eyes that pull us toward them. And everywhere, brittle shells of red clay seem to slough away from their frameworks like melting skin.

In its hyper-expressive palpability, Bhabha's art emits raw emotion and might well reflect current sociopolitical upheavals, particularly in Pakistan. These psychologically rich sculptures could be the descendants of Louise Bourgeois's. —***Trent Morse***

'Peter Saul/Jim Shaw Drawings'

Mary Boone

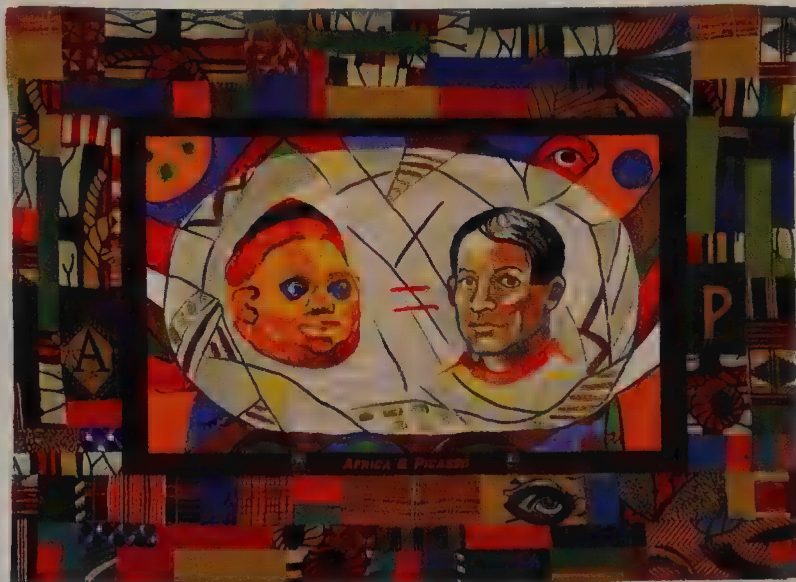
Curator Klaus Kertess's decision to juxtapose Peter Saul with Jim Shaw makes perfect sense if you are a veteran of psychoanalysis addicted to cartoons. You simply have to remember that in cartoons things are always blending into and becoming other things, and that metamorphosis governs reality, while acknowledging, at the same time, that something buried within is trying to tell you something. Something you don't necessarily want to hear.

Jim Shaw's rendition of Michelangelo's lost 1504 cartoon for the never-painted fresco *The Battle of Cascina*, metamorphosed here into *Paedomorphic Cartoon of Cartoon of Cartoon of Battle of Cascina* (2012), brings these seemingly disparate ideas together. Michelangelo's fondness for male nudes, supposedly a reflection of his homosexuality, would transform in Shaw's mind into the other kind of cartoon, which would then metamorphose again into a "paedomorphic" cartoon, in which the entwined youthful bodies are embarked on a sexual orgy rather than springing out of a river to fight a battle. That battle, fought by the victorious Florentines, is lost, but a tumultuous vision of male desire is gained.

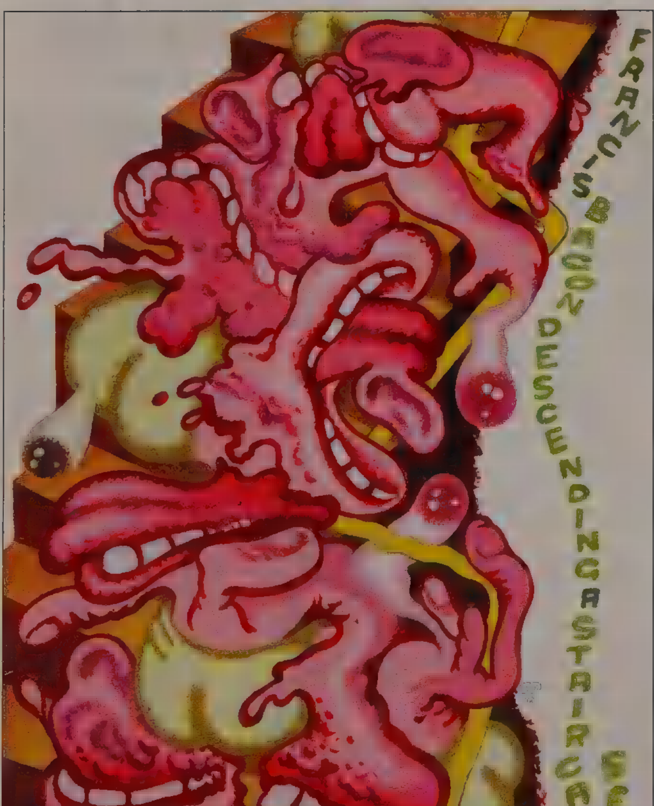
Peter Saul's version of how to transform one work of art into another also involves the metamorphosis of a major artist. *Francis Bacon Descending a Staircase* (2012), one of a series of works by Saul based on Marcel Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase No. 2* (1912), turns Bacon into a meaty mess. Duchamp's painting was parodied in cartoons after the 1913 Armory Show, so Saul's pencil drawing fits into a tradition. Is Duchamp's staircase now a symbol of Bacon's moral descent into artistic chaos? Hard to say, but Saul's trademark manipulation of color transforms the muted tones of the original into something new and strange.

Saul and Shaw may never be yoked together this way again, so this wonderful show was a unique opportunity to have fun and to think seriously about dreams and the history of art.

—Alfred Mac Adam



Emma Amos, ***Africa and Picasso***, 2000, oil on linen and African fabric border, 31" x 42". Flomenhaft.



Peter Saul, ***Francis Bacon Descending a Staircase***, 2012, acrylic, colored pencil on paper, 29" x 23". Mary Boone.

Emma Amos

Flomenhaft

Emma Amos, a longtime pioneer of feminist and African American art movements, captures moments of black experience in a way that exudes pride accompanied by just the right touch of satire. Working with African fabrics, unstretched canvas, photocollage, and watercolor, she often combines these elements in works that can be at once cozy and confrontational.

The centerpiece of this exhibition was *The Gift* (1990–4), a grid of 48 portraits of women who contributed to the feminist art movement, from Lucy Lippard and Miriam Schapiro to bell hooks and Elizabeth Catlett. Amos, a participant in several activist groups, pictures these women as friends and fellow travelers rather than as unapproachable historic figures. The deceptively simple watercolors capture something of the spirit and interrogatory outlook of these pioneers. It can be seen in the thick black lines portraying the dreadlocks framing Lorna Simpson's face and in the mischievous smile on Faith Ringgold's lips. Taken as a whole, this wall of faces staring down at viewers provided a snapshot of a moment in art history when women artists—sans makeup—directly confronted the art world despite the towering odds against their success.

More recent pieces here included *Carmen* (2012), a painting of a stunning black woman in a red dress framed by an indigo-and-orange triangle-patterned cloth with the name "Carmen" embroidered below, and *Sun and Moon* (2010), a similarly constructed canvas, featuring a boy and a girl forthrightly greeting viewers without fear or hesitation. Such works evince a sense of contentment missing from earlier ones here, including *Confederates* (1994), in which the artist and two other figures, set against a backdrop of the Confederate flag, confront the audience. This well-selected survey of Amos's multi-decade career showed her progress as an artist while also revealing a certain confidence and maturity that has always pervaded her work.

—Barbara Pollack

UP NOW

Chim

International Center of Photography
Through May 5

The esteemed documentary photographer Chim has long been celebrated for his compassionate images of children, but this engrossing, comprehensive show offers a broader, more subtle range of his work. Born David Szymin in Warsaw in 1911 (he considered Chim easier to spell and say—later, he went by David Seymour), he began photographing rallies and protests for leftist magazines in France in the mid-1930s and remained committed to covering political struggle. But as this show demonstrates, his keen, sympathetic eye found interest and grace all over.

Chim, ***Children playing on Omaha Beach, Normandy, France***, 1947, ink-jet print, 10" x 10". International Center of Photography.

In 1936, Chim traveled with his friends Robert Capa and Gerda Taro to cover the Spanish Civil War. Their work gained international attention, particularly an image of a clear-eyed boy wearing an antifascist cap and carrying a toy rifle. The photo had originally been attributed to Capa, but negatives in the recently discovered "Mexican Suitcase," containing Capa's Spanish Civil War negatives, show that it was actually by Chim, who fled to the United States in 1939.

Chim was able to restart his career after the war with an assignment to photograph Europe's rebuilding effort. His surreal image of children playing on the beach at Normandy under a rusted ship's hull made the cover of the syndicated Sunday magazine *This Week*. Then he received a commission from UNESCO to document Europe's war orphans and this resulted in some of the photographer's most haunting images. A shot from Warsaw in 1948, titled *Tereska standing by her drawing of "home" in a home for emotionally disturbed children, Warsaw,* shows a distraught girl drawing a chaotic, swirling pattern on a blackboard. In an image from Naples in 1948, a bare-bottomed boy pushes an overturned chair through a market, ignored by adults.

But children were by no means Chim's sole subject. As an established foreign correspondent after the war, he covered political events throughout Europe and into the Middle East. Among the speeches and strikes he covered were bits of poetic everyday life—the Swiss Guard's laundry hanging in front of Bernini's columns at the Vatican, women in Tel Aviv praying on the beach on the first day of Rosh Hashanah.

He also shot celebrity portraits, which provided income for Magnum, the photo agency that he, along with Capa, George Rodger, and Henri Cartier-Bresson founded in 1947. In one image, the 90-year-old art historian Bernard Berenson seems to delight in his view of a nude marble woman who reclines on carved pillows. But photojournalism remained Chim's calling. In 1956, he was killed covering the Suez Crisis in Egypt, but not before making an image of a woman walking through rubble, carrying a chair above her head as if to rescue it.

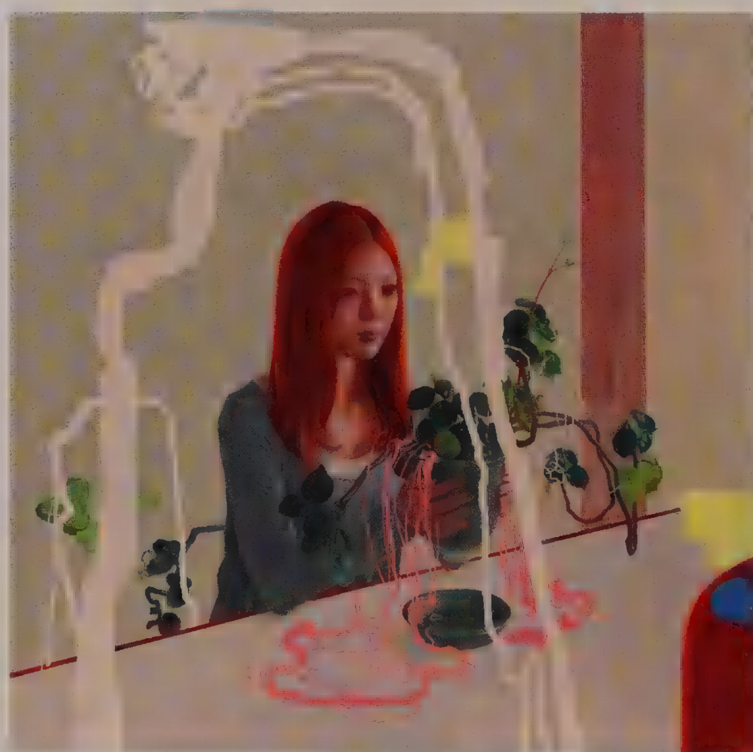
—Rebecca Robertson

James Jean

Tilton

The psychedelic spirit of the '60s seemed to be blowing through James Jean's wildly diverse show, which ranged from Grateful Dead–style skeleton prints to hyperrealist portraits of dreamy young women. Well known for his comic-book covers and swirly, fairy-tale designs for Prada, the Taiwanese American artist brought a mix of historical and contemporary graphic influences to his expansive show, titled "Parallel Lives." It's hard to miss the references to Hokusai in Jean's purple-and-pink 2012 tondo *Wave*, an archival ink-jet print mounted on aluminum. Echoes of Aubrey Beardsley and Art Nouveau artist Alphonse Mucha turn up in other images, such as that of a naked girl encircled by her hair in *Chrome* (2012), an ink-on-printmaking-paper drawing covered with blue Plexiglas. Then there were baroquely ornate drawings and prints that created a kind of surrealistic mash-up of Albrecht Dürer, Giuseppe Arcimboldo, E.J. Sullivan, and M.C. Escher.

Some of Jean's paintings look as put together as fashion shots. In one, a lovely, auburn-haired girl dozes against a flat,



James Jean, ***Plant***, 2012, acrylic on synthetic textile, 72" x 72". Tilton.

neutral background. In another, she sends text messages; in a third, she lifts a potted plant, while streams of pink paint pour over its brim down onto the table. A graffiti-like white scrawl in this last tableau makes a random arc across the front of the picture plane. These rivulets, which also appear in some of his other works, are scrawled across the Plexiglas and frame of a piece called *Velum* (2012), suggesting a fierce and restless presence against a backdrop that is almost decorative.

—***Mona Molarsky***

John Byam, assorted sculptures, ca. 1970-80s, wood, sawdust, glue, between 2" and 9" high. Andrew Edlin.

John Byam

Andrew Edlin

This unsettling and intriguing show of drawings and small wooden sculptures by John Byam, a Korean War veteran, former gravedigger, and trailer-park attendant, included cartoonlike drawings, some copied from newspaper photos, others pulled from television or his imagination, and all inscribed with the phrase "A Hobby to Draw Pictures." In many ways, that sums up the attitude and spontaneous nature of Byam's art-making. The artist's draftsmanship is childish, but his conceptions can be funny and poetic. In one drawing, a large veteran, just home from the war, holds a doll-size parent under each arm. In another, a woman in orange and blue underwear announces she's the Venus de Milo. "Welcome to the planet," she says. "But beware there are dangers."

The sculptures, concocted from scraps of wood, at first seemed like toys made by a child. On closer inspection, however, they assumed an ominous aura. There were tiny airplanes, cameras, and robots; also soldiers, coffins, hospital gurneys, and men digging graves. Meticulously decorated with glued-on sawdust—which suggests the grime of war and the debris of the ages—the little figures are as macabre as Mexican folk artifacts but so much more somber. They are pure American Gothic. Why did Byam make these objects, and to whom was he addressing them? Ultimately this eccentric body of work demonstrated directly, using his idiosyncratic artistic vocabulary and iconography, his complex responses to daily life and war.

—***Mona Molarsky***

Gayle Wells Mandle & Julia Mandle

Leila Heller

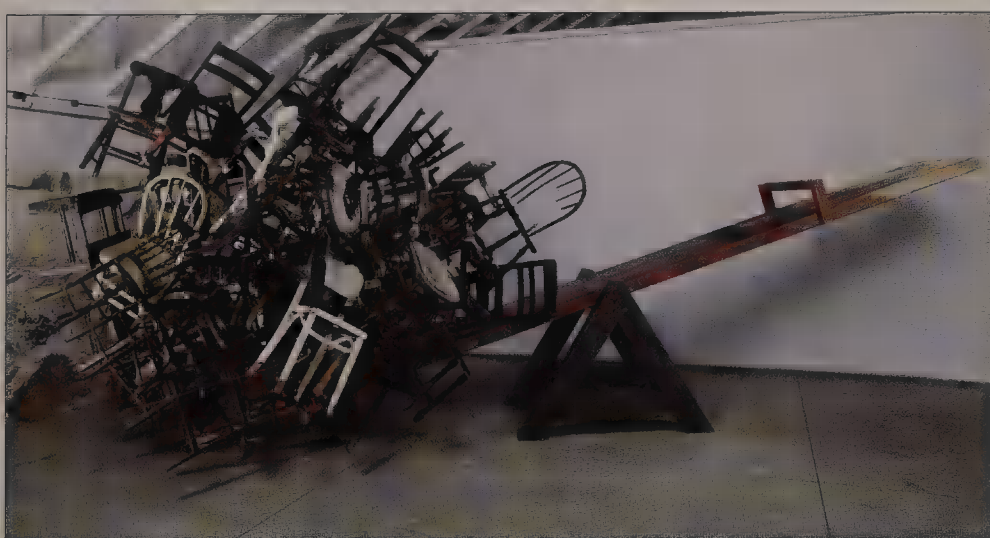
The new work in this show, titled "Game II," by Gayle Wells Mandle & Julia Mandle, a mother-daughter collaborative, took the humble wooden chair as its central metaphor. Using a variety of mediums, the artists mined that ubiquitous piece of furniture, both as object and idea for all its poetic potential.

The gallery was dominated by the massive sculpture *Study for a Monument* (all works 2012), in which a heap of burned chairs in dozens of styles had been placed on one end of an oversize seesaw, weighing down the uninhabited opposite end. Inspired by the artists' anguished reaction to injustices inflicted on pro-democracy protesters during last year's Arab Spring uprisings, the work stands as a poignant, theatrical set piece or artifact from a troubled, unequal society.

In addition to sculpture, the Mandles presented drawings, photographs, and embroidery-based works. *Rising Tide*, an embroidery on canvas by Julia Mandle, the daughter in the duo, depicts a sweeping black wave of chairs apparently on the verge of crashing and becoming even more disordered. The mother, Gayle Wells, provided a Rauschenberg-like construction, *Libro D'Oro*, consisting of a large painting of an artfully defaced book cover with a broken wooden chair at its base and the words "ONCE UPON A TIME" just visible in the background.

By employing different materials and styles in their sociopolitical approach to art-making, the Mandles hoped to provoke viewers to rethink their particular nationalistic perspectives and try to address the world's wounds. The wooden chairs, with the modest comfort they offer, can be viewed as symbols of egalitarian, frail, and ultimately silent survivors.

—***Doug McClemont***



Gayle Wells Mandle & Julia Mandle, *Study for a Monument*, 2012, burnt chair installation, 7' x 20' x 10'. Leila Heller.

Charlotte Dumas

Julie Saul

Dutch photographer Charlotte Dumas has spent her career searching for soulfulness in animals, photographing police dogs and strays, zoo tigers and horses, and finding in them a kind of self-possession more often seen in human portraits. For this touching show of nine large color images and one video, Dumas was commissioned by the Corcoran Gallery of Art to photograph the burial horses of Arlington National Cemetery, who spend their days pulling the coffins of American soldiers. Dumas photographed the animals in their stalls at night by available light, and the soft, grainy images show the solitary hours when these massive creatures appear vulnerable. Like the late photojournalist Tim Hetherington's portraits of sleeping Marines, Dumas's images depict the powerful at rest.

The horses' coats came in all shades of speckled gray and white, ghostly coloring that befits their daytime work. Bits of straw clung to their thickly muscled necks as the animals sat in their stalls, legs tucked neatly beneath them, or sprawled on their sides—apparently they do not always sleep standing up. Some images were titled with each horse's name, and some framed just the animal's head and forelegs. In *Peter, Arlington National Cemetery, Arlington, Virginia* (2012), a long neck bends forward, the nose resting on the ground. A few images showed only withers or flanks. The smoothly rippled curves suggested carved marble.

More visceral than the still photos is *Anima* (2012), a 14-minute video of the same subject, on view in a darkened backroom. There we could hear the horses' slow breathing and watch their ears pivot and noses twitch as they approach sleep. Muscles shudder as they sigh and finally succumb. The descent into sleep is both instantly familiar and thrilling. *—Rebecca Robertson*

Charlotte Dumas, *Peter, Arlington National Cemetery, Arlington, Virginia,* 2012, pigment print, 35⅜" x 47¼". Julie Saul.

Beth Lipman

Claire Oliver

Beth Lipman's tour-de-force exhibition consisted of three large masterfully fabricated handblown glass sculptures. Installed near the gallery's entrance, *Flotsam and Jetsam* (2012) began with delicate twigs descending along the wall above the front desk. By the time it reached the center of the adjoining wall, it blossomed into a three-dimensional muddle of tubes, plates, and broken glasses, conjuring a post-party debacle.

The freestanding *Pitcher with Vines* (2011) also conjures a party gone wrong. On a small black table, a raging kudzu vine invades a mass of glass objects, including a basket stuffed with fruit, drinking vessels, a loaf of bread on a plate, and a burning candle. One broken dish has sent a spill of solidified liquid over an indeterminate white mass, suggesting the metamorphosis from liquid to solid that accompanies the creation of the glass. Everything is frozen—water in a glass, spilled liquids, even the burning flame—yet something destructive and violent has clearly occurred.

In contrast, the rather formal *Sideboard with Blue China* (2013) is a tweaked reproduction of an ornate piece of mid-19th-century furniture that was shown at the New York Crystal Palace in 1853. Set into a relatively unadorned white wood framework, Lipman's glass interpretations of the sideboard's decorative portions are mostly uncolored except for hints of amber and green. An eagle in flight surmounts the central section of the piece, which is flanked at its edges by hands, suggesting a body with outstretched arms. The cabinet doors below are each decorated with a bow-topped oval, and a large empty urn sits at the table center, with a column on either side surrounded by vegetables. Decorative foliage rises on both sides of the sideboard, like wallpaper made of glass. Lipman's monumental work is a novel riff on art and craft, form and function, and cultural history. *—Elisabeth Kley*

Beth Lipman, *Sideboard with Blue China,* 2013, glass, wood, paint, glue, 111" x 300" x 22". Claire Oliver.

Feng Mengbo

Chambers Fine Art

Feng Mengbo, *M Shot0040*, 2012, ink and mixed media on canvas, 29½" x 46½". Chambers Fine Art.

Beijing-based video and new-media artist Feng Mengbo has recently redirected his production toward classical Chinese painting and calligraphy, adding a further component to the depiction of video games and their far-reaching implications, which have preoccupied him since the early 1990s. The artist's paintings here were updated, hybridized interpretations of classical syntax and were culled from countless images taken from his hypnotic video *Not Too Late* (2010), included in this exhibition. Based on the violent, multiplayer game *Quake III Arena*, it is the source of many of the artist's previous works. For this show, he created a MOD that erased most of the figurative references. What remains resembles an abstract painting in process, where one abstract gesture seems to organically, spontaneously trigger another and so on.

The many handsome, mixed-media inkjet stills called "Shots" encircled the gallery, where they were sometimes hung as diptychs or triptychs, the orientation always horizontal, as if they were unfurled scroll paintings or strips of single frames of film. The prints, hand-painted in places, juxtapose new technologies with the artisanal and the one-off. In black-and-white, with slashes of red, yellow, and sometimes an artificial blue-green, their exuberant compositions, their sense of urgency often suggested all-too-topical detonations. Chinese characters fade in and out of legibility, sometimes disintegrating into pure abstraction, other times being more denotative. There is abundant white ground showing, adding a certain airiness that points to the transformation of voids into something that is full and positive, which characterizes much of Chinese painting. This kind of paradoxical exchange continues to be part of the culture even as China modernizes and as artists like Feng reconcile new media with a revered, resplendent, tenacious heritage.

—Lilly Wei

Ishmael Randall Weeks

Drawing Center
Eleven Rivington

The subtly compelling show of works by Ishmael Randall Weeks at Eleven Rivington, titled "Quoin"—an architectural term referring to the exterior angle of a building or to a component block of that corner—was clearly dedicated to the built world, as structured naturally, man-made, or in the imagination. It offered an often surprising investigation, or rather intervention, into how we see, understand, and construct images and memories—and how every angle presents a new route into perception.

A group of acrylic and photo-transfer drawings, like *Structure (Nuevo Mundo Number 1)* and *Extension (Nuevo Mundo Number 6)*, all 2012, showed cities and girders and poles and bridges with fine white lines cut through and geometric shapes superimposed, or with geometric cutouts revealing an unexpected view. Despite the fact that most of the artworks were so small, they were remarkably strong and attention grabbing.

This Cuzco-born artist, based in Lima, brings with him an ancient tradition. Villages built into cliffs are implied in sculptures like *Ibeam* (2012), a boulder-like piece made of carved books that stretched across the room. From one angle *Ibeam* looks like a chiseled-out mountainside; from another, it shows colorful book spines. The recycled books embody history and culture. *Telar* (2012), a construction using newspaper print and image transfers, hung in such a way as to suggest the tedium of reality.

Architecture, urban life, culture, and history pervaded all the works in these two shows. "Cuts, Burns, Punctures," curated by Claire Gilman at the Drawing Center, consisted of double-slide projections of Peru featuring found images into which Weeks intervened with slashes and even dirt. Many of the images referred to political circumstances in the '70s and '80s. As the slides went in and out of focus, they continually altered our own ways of seeing. They allowed us to sample a kind of documentary of Peru from an obsessive artist's viewpoint. Weeks has appropriated his country's history, established his place in it, repurposed its detritus, and even escaped the ravages of its politics in a fascinating kind of tribute.

—Barbara A. MacAdam

Ishmael Randall Weeks, *Quarto (Nuevo Mundo Number 3)*, 2012, acrylic and photo-transfer drawing with cutout mounted on paper, 9¾" x 9⅛". Eleven Rivington.

'It's Over There'

Simone Subal

In this smart and tricky show curated by Rachel LaBine, reality was the raw material—to be investigated, tampered with, but never left undisturbed. Here, artists collaborated—with objects and illusions, past and present, tradition and its update and/or ruptures.

Viola Yesiltac, ***Oysters, they do breathe, don't they?***, **2012 (floor), black-and-white archival ink-jet on Somerset Enhanced Velvet natural white, two handblown pink glass vessels, 109" x 87". Marie Lund, *Still*, 2012 (wall), found curtain, wooden stretchers, 50" x 43". Simone Subal.**

Setting the stage was Emily Mast's *B!RDBRA!N (Addendum)*, 2012, a hilarious video of a performance and a compendium of objects and their abstract components. People, things, and graphics point to one another but don't necessarily connect, while bright colors talk, sign language is spoken, and music animates.

Summing up the spirit was Matt Keegan & James Richards's *Don't Worry* (2012), an unfolding stainless-steel piece with stenciled letters cut out to read: "Don't Worry, What Happens, Happens Mostly Without You."

And so it seemed. Consider Marie Lund's two pieces of misshapen concrete, *Untitled* (2012)—dumb objects that are indisputably solid and present, but what are they? How do we remember them?

Viola Yesiltac's clearly defined images were differently unknowable. The color prints, which document hard-edged unrecognizable forms, ironically appear illusive with fugitive-looking pigment. On the floor was *Oysters, they do breathe, don't they?* (2012), looking like a dense black sculpture with a sheer black shadow, accompanied by two real pink tumblers.

Rose Marcus also used glasses, punning with her *One liner (Koolhaus writing)*, 2012, an ink-jet photo on adhesive vinyl. The glasses are positioned where eyes or breasts might be inside the cut-out outline of a rectangle, which could be viewed as a body, a face, a table top, or a room within a room. "Multiliner" might have been more to the point.

Fact and fiction tickled perceptions in Lucy Skaer's *Us to Them V* (2012), a photograph mounted on aluminum of a Vuillard painting, intercepted by an "actual" hand holding a piece of wood. And more confounding was Lund's *Still* (2012)—Duchampian in its readymade-ness. A pun on photography and film, it is a found faded blue curtain mounted on stretchers and imprinted with a natural pattern of bleached-out trees suggesting a fairy-tale forest. The "painting" painted itself without paint.

This fascinating show represented a new new realism, extending far beyond the real. ***—Barbara A. MacAdam***

Isabelle Hayeur

Pierogi

Isabelle Hayeur is the anti–Jacques Cousteau. Like the famous French documentarian, Hayeur explores marine ecosystems, but the Montreal artist is most fascinated by industrial waterways bereft of life. In the five photographs and one video in this thought-provoking show, Hayeur halfway submerges her camera in the water so that we see both devastated seascapes below the surface and equally damaged scenery above.

Isabelle Hayeur, *Death In Absentia 1*, 2011, ink-jet print mounted on aluminum panel, 42" x 72". Pierogi.

With their large-scale panoramic formats, the photos in the 2011 series "Death In Absentia," shot at a boat graveyard off Staten Island, have an almost cinematic feel. Shallow seas in a blue-green haze dominate the lower half of each piece, and nothing seems to live down there except fuzzy algae. (Hayeur herself would have likely been in danger from pollutants if it weren't for the watertight contraption in which she sealed herself while taking the pictures.)

Above the surface, in the upper frame, the views are just as bleak: decommissioned ferries, tugboats, and barges in the distance are partially sunken and slowly disintegrating, like so many corpses. Blurry droplets on the lens further distort these catastrophic tableaux, which are striking and disturbing in their eerie serenity.

Serving as a sort of behind-the-scenes supplement to the photographs, the 14-minute video *Castaway* (2012) gives us close-up glimpses of the site. To a soundtrack of creaking ships and foghorns, Hayeur takes her camera ashore to capture splintering piers and shabby trees, and then cruises underwater among the rusty hulls—not a creature in sight the whole time. Finally, she points the camera at the rippling surface, where reflections of clouds in the sky become indistinguishable from silt clouds underneath.

All of this had the potential to become environmentalist propaganda, but Hayeur brings a sense of wide-eyed wonderment to her beautifully rendered vistas of aquatic dead zones.

—Trent Morse

'Florence at the Dawn of the Renaissance'

J. Paul Getty [redacted]
Los Angeles

This exhibition would have been a significant event if all it had to offer were seven paintings by Giotto di Bondone, the largest group of the influential Italian master's work ever shown in North America. But that was merely one fascinating aspect of this expansive investigation of artistic production in 14th-century Florence. Subtitled "Painting and Illumination, 1300–50" and organized with the Art Gallery of Ontario, the show of 98 objects addressed the development of narrative religious art and workshop practices in the great Italian city, and explored the relationship between paintings and illuminated manuscripts.

Relatively large panel paintings, including Giotto's magnificent Peruzzi Altarpiece, *Christ Blessing with Saint John the Evangelist, the Virgin Mary, Saint John the Baptist, and Saint Francis* (ca. 1309–15), and Bernardo Daddi's triptych *The Virgin Mary with Saints Thomas Aquinas and Paul* (ca. 1335), had commanding physical presences. In both, bold images of individual figures against gold backgrounds attracted viewers, who could discover surprisingly naturalistic details and emotional nuances in faces and gestures upon approaching the works. Paintings such as these, which were made for churches and family chapels, appeared alongside smaller, more delicate pieces created for individual devotional study and daily guidance, illuminating art's prominent place in Florentine life.

Pacino di Bonaguida, *Laudario of Sant'Agnese* (detail), ca. 1340, tempera and gold on parchment, 17½" x 12½". J. Paul Getty Museum.

The last section of the show was devoted to the *Laudario of Sant'Agnese* (ca. 1340), a luxurious manuscript, which was known as the most exquisite and ambitious book of its kind, illuminated by Pacino di Bonaguida and the Master of the Dominican Effigies. Its parchment leaves, commemorating feasts of the liturgical year, were eventually dispersed for sale. But here, for the first time, 24 of the surviving 28 leaves and fragments were reunited—a suitably grand finale for a remarkable exhibition.

—Suzanne Muchnic

Scott Fraser, *Reign*, 2012, oil on canvas, 84¾" x 79". Jenkins Johnson.

Scott Fraser

[redacted] Johnson
San Francisco

Many fastidious realists have too few ideas; Colorado-based painter Scott Fraser may have too many. The 33 pieces in "Outside the Box" burst with jokes, allusions, and other marks of pictorial self-consciousness, but these qualities reward the sustained attention that the high craft of Fraser's work implicitly demands.

The graphite drawings included in the exhibition—most of them preparatory studies for the paintings on view—and a time-lapse video of the artist producing the large oil on canvas *Reign* (2012) illuminated the care Fraser puts into his canvases. *Reign*, the show's centerpiece, depicts a still-life setup on a white table, with arrows raining down from above in parallel lines, like the bowler-hatted men who shower René Magritte's paintings. The arrows pierce the tabletop, break a cup and saucer, and impale a sneaker. Various reflective objects and a skull on the floor demonstrate Fraser's representational skill, and put into relief his wry subversion of still-life conventions. Though the work seems to be an open declaration of Fraser's admiration for Magritte, the artist explains in the video that the arrows symbolize modernism's shattering effect on pictorial tradition. That sentiment was echoed in a series of watercolors with punning titles, in which the artist expressed his anti-modernist sentiments as freely as a cartoonist might.

Several smaller paintings on view referred overtly to Edwin Dickinson's 1924–26 *The Cello Player*, a masterpiece of eccentric realism. But Fraser's most appealing pieces were simpler, such as *Catenary Kiss II* (2011). In this oil on canvas, foil-wrapped chocolates rain down from above to form an allover graphic composition, with an almost subliminal parabola—the catenary curve—threading through the array. But for all the devices on display in Fraser's art, the work finally owes its magnetic effect to the dedication Fraser brings to it.

—Kenneth Baker

Dorothea Tanning

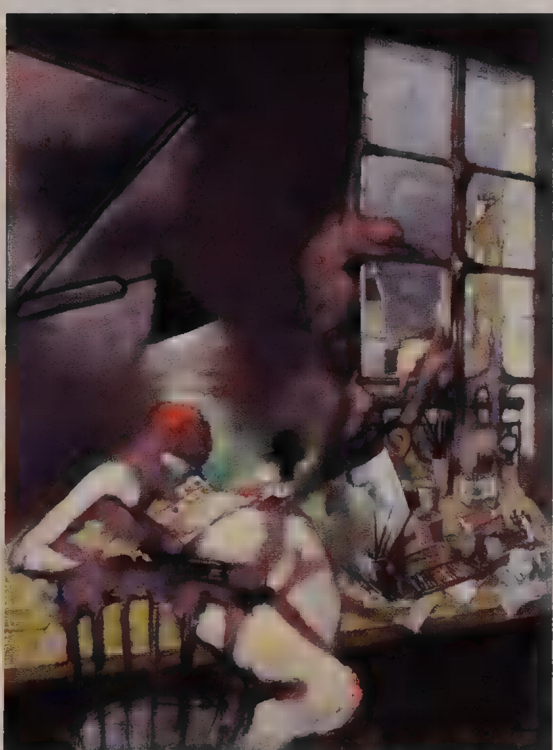
Gallery [redacted]
San Francisco

Titled "Unknown but Knowable States," this exhibition featured Dorothea Tanning's paintings, sculptures, and works on paper from the 1960s and '70s, when she left behind the narrative surrealism

of her early career and plunged further into her unconscious. The artist, who died last year at the age of 101, belonged to the Dada and Surrealist circles of Yves Tanguy, Man Ray, and Max Ernst, her husband. While her work from the '40s and '50s depicted foreboding scenes of women and children confronting strange beasts or logic-defying landscapes, she devoted herself over the next two decades to imagined, dreamlike imagery, which she laid down in rippling layers of ethereal pigment.

The works here presented an unsettling mixture of bodily distortion and decorous, almost reverent paint application. Allover jumbles of arm-toes, torso-phalluses, and gaping, Francis Bacon–esque maws populated these grisly pictures. The show's centerpiece, the approximately 7-by-10-foot *Chiens de Cythère* (Dogs of Cythera), 1963, presents a cloudy tangle of bodiless limbs and straining dogs' heads in dirty whites and bruised purples. But Tanning isn't all doom and dismemberment: in *Même les jeunes filles* (Even the Young Girls), 1966, her faceless figures form a dancerly circle of bright yellow and mauve that looks as celebratory as a scene by Matisse.

Tanning had a sense of humor, too, which is evident in her poignant soft sculptures. *Traffic Sign* (1970), a fake-fur pole supporting a bulbous, flesh-toned fabric breast—or pregnant belly?—has all the vulnerability of her painted figures but with an extra jolt of absurdity. —***Lamar Anderson***



Dorothea Tanning, ***Still in the Studio***, 1979, oil on canvas, 51 3/16" x 38 3/16". Gallery Wendi Norris.

Franz Kline

Allentown Art Museum
Allentown, Pennsylvania

Although Franz Kline is generally associated with the Abstract Expressionist scene in New York, where he lived until his death in 1962, this exhibition of 64 paintings and works on paper explored the artist's roots in Pennsylvania's coal and steel country, which curator Robert Mattison insists are crucial to his mature work. Incorporating archival film footage of locomotives and photographs of the domain, "Coal and Steel" successfully demonstrated that the celebrated modernist's vigorous abstractions seem to reference features characteristic of his native anthracite-mining region, such as train tracks, bridges, and coal breakers.

Turin (1960), a monumental abstract oil of slashing bars and splinters of black paint, contains stark silhouettes that might echo the trestle bridges and undulating hills pictured in smaller studies and early regionalist works like *Pennsylvania Landscape* (1948–49). In the earlier pieces, Kline's flowing brushwork weaves together the various elements of the landscape in complimentary reds and greens, and the composition includes a bridge located near the Kline family home. In other representational works that include figure studies, a nude self-portrait, and New York street scenes, Kline experiments with thick black outlines. It's not difficult to recognize these angular shapes repurposed as abstract strokes in the style for which the artist is best known.

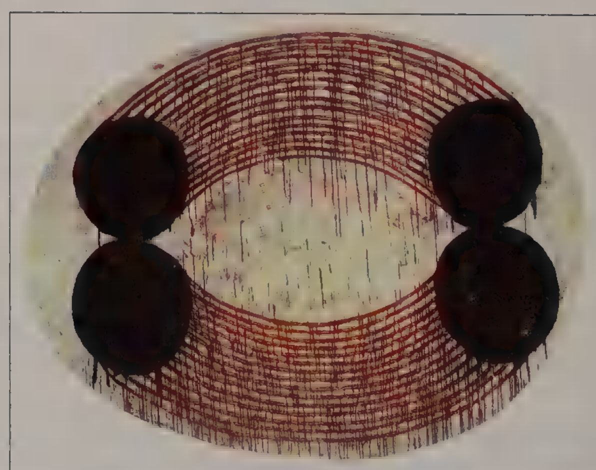
Mattison included archival documentation of the coal industry's devastating effects on the region, which reinforced the sense of powerful desolation that is so evident in Kline's paintings. And while linking the artist's use of black and white to the dominant photographic technology of the day, the show also postulated that Kline's interactions with coal-blackened miners returning from work underground may have initiated his engagement with both tones. —***Robin Rice***

Franz Kline, ***PA Street Scene (Pennsylvania Mining Town)***, 1947, oil on canvas, 15" x 19". Allentown Art Museum.

Steven Cushner

Hemphill Fine Arts
Washington, D.C.

During an intense three-year period toward the beginning of his career, Washington artist Steven Cushner confined himself to a limited palette and a set of simplified organic and gestural elements. Working with meticulous lines, plentiful drips, and repeating forms, he developed a series of large, primarily black-and-white shaped canvases that were unrestrained by traditional rectilinear formats, their physical presences instead dictated by the imagery they contained. This fascinating show brought together seven of the



Steven Cushner, ***Bola***, 1991, acrylic on canvas, 72½" x 95". Hemphill Fine Arts.

PRIVATE COLLECTION

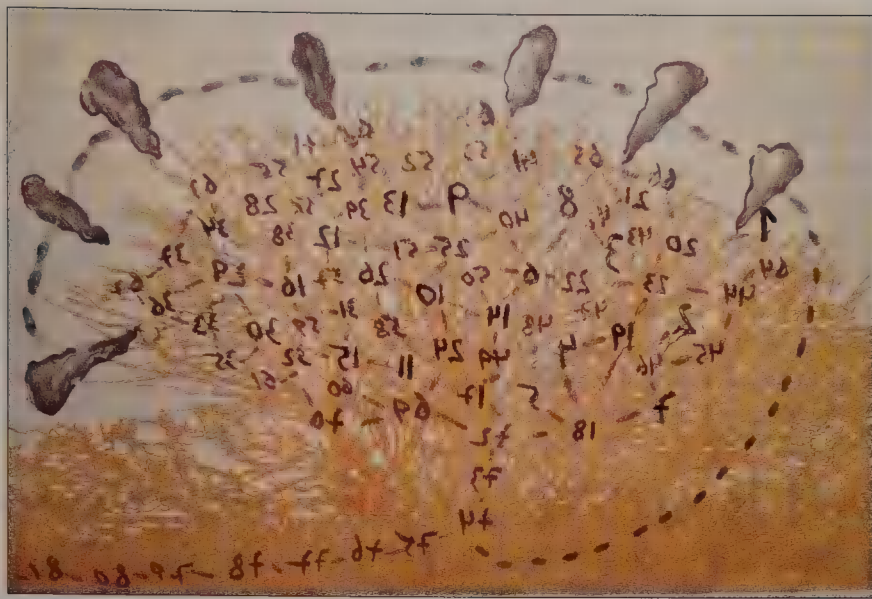
COURTESY THE DOROTHEA TANNING FOUNDATION AND GALLERY WENDI NORRIS, SAN FRANCISCO

resulting acrylic paintings, and a handful of related charcoals on paper, all from 1991–93—and they look awfully good to 21st-century eyes.

Cushner has said that his work from this era was inspired by the shapes of real-life objects—a fountain, rippling waves, or cylindrical cans. The large canvas *Fountain* (1992), for example, blends a series of cascading waterfalls punctuated with free-flowing drips. And the "Tides" series of three canvases from 1992 evokes the movement of water in wavy, repeating, black-and-white forms that seem to emulate the ebb and flow of ocean tides.

The artist achieved nearly mesmerizing effects with *Betrothal*, a 1991 extravaganza measuring nearly ten feet across, in which two precisely delineated cylindrical forms come together in a union that reflects the work's title. In *Bola* (1991), one of the few color works on view, two sets of reddish-brown balls at either end of swooping strokes of comparable color are united in an energetic, esthetically pleasing composition.

Since Cushner's simple, early paintings, he has gone on to make brightly patterned pieces. But this show's return to some of his artistic roots demonstrated his versatility, and reaffirmed the appeal of his rigorously restrained earlier paintings. —***Stephen May***



Yizhak Elyashiv, *untitled (#3)*, 2008, engraving and ink on paper, 28" x 58". Gallery NAGA.

Yizhak Elyashiv

Gallery NAGA
Boston

After years of mapping his own physical movements, Israeli-born printmaker Yizhak Elyashiv turned his attention to the geography of real-life places to produce the six haunting prints in this show. The untitled works, which the artist has said were inspired by the landscapes of County Mayo, Ireland, and Israel's Negev Desert, included drypoint and engraving, sometimes with ink drawing added. Every scene united environments with the sort of abstracted locations Elyashiv has long composed through such poetic gestures as tossing grains of rice onto metal plates.

The quietest work, *untitled (#5)*, a 9-by-23-inch drypoint from 2010, presents a horizontal array of slender marks—stubbly grasses almost disappearing into a haze that could emanate from scorching sunlight or steady mist. Elyashiv has made regular visits to Ireland for more than a dozen years, and he knows the Negev well from his time spent there as a guard for the Israeli Defense Forces. Despite the striking differences between the settings, Elyashiv has deftly extracted motifs from both, and his prints gain strength—and an unlikely harmony—from the resulting visual ambiguity.

Stretching across ten sheets of paper, the scruffy vista in the 2011 mixed media *untitled (#4)* rolls in areas of light and shadow, built from thousands of steely marks. Wildness has overtaken this spot, but Elyashiv has registered his logical, human imprint on the space, adding fine lines that fan out from above and connect points to one another in an airy geometry. Pink numbers, in repeating sequences from zero to nine, dot the lumpy ground and dangle like cherry blossoms from arcing gray branches. Graceful but improbable, the floating numerals suggest the human impulse to organize the observed world in order to understand it. —***Joanne Silver***

Robert Motherwell

Jerald Melberg
Charlotte, North Carolina

This encounter with the works of Robert Motherwell, one of the youngest and most prolific of the Abstract Expressionists, proved that his art remains as fresh and daring as ever. The 50 paintings, works on paper, and prints on view covered major bodies of work from many points in Motherwell's career, such as his ongoing "Elegy" series and his "Open" paintings from the late 1960s to the early '70s. These employ many of the artist's well-known strategies and techniques: the flat surface, the quick, gestural movements, the lack of narrative. But more importantly, Motherwell's pieces activate the space between viewer and artwork, creating an energetic spark that snaps between them.

Pinks and reds peek through the painted bronze surface of *Open No. 89* (1969), the canvas animated by the black lines of an open rectangle—and a

Robert Motherwell, *In Ochre with Scarlet Spot*, 1968, acrylic and pasted paper on paper, 30½" x 22½". Jerald Melberg.

ghostly form or two. A black glyph with teeth like a pitchfork boldly holds the center in *Untitled (Open)*, 1973, while beneath it, a gorgeous slash of pink, ridged and creamy, sets the whole composition in motion. Purity of color, form, and stroke fills these works, a precise matching of means to intentions. The result is rich, even profound, and oddly personal.

Gestural marks decorate the glowing, golden work *In Ochre with Scarlet Spot* (1968), on which Motherwell pasted a piece of brown paper decorated with an oval daub of red. Although the scarlet mark was clearly created with a brush, it feels so intimate that it seems, for a moment, like it could have been made by the artist's lips. ***—Richard Maschal***

John Sabraw

McCormick
Chicago

The 31 pieces in John Sabraw's recent exhibition "arborescent" seemed, at first glance, to be made by several different artists. Uniting three distinct bodies of work—a series of landscapes, a suite of detailed paintings of tree bark, and a number of round, abstract, mixed-media pieces—the show illuminated the Ohio-based artist's exploration of the natural world, both macro- and microscopically.

Unified Theory v2 (2012), an enormous round digital print on fabric, offers a visual cross section of what is on the artist's mind. Made up of hundreds of tiny images, it is heavy on circular shapes like planets and rosettes, along with material from nature like leaves and agates. From this piece, viewers could deduce that the smaller round pieces from the artist's "Chroma" series, with their organic forms and textures, also draw on scientific and biological motifs. Indeed, their colors are bright, as if illuminated from below by a microscope's cone of light.

The strongest works here, however, were the more traditional and ethereal landscapes. Sabraw is exceptionally skilled as a realist painter, and each of these paintings depicts a quiet, and often misty, rural scene. In *Cloister* (2012), an oil on wood panel, the green grass at viewers' feet in the foreground fades into the mist; in the distance we spot the ghostly shadow of a lone tree. And in the oil on aluminum *Kasumi-ki* (2012)—in Japanese, "Kasumi" means mist and "ki" refers to the life or energy source—the tops of barren trees sprout from the bottom of the frame, surrounded by a peaceful color field of white winter fog, gloriously capturing the serenity of this weather phenomenon. ***—Ruth Lopez***

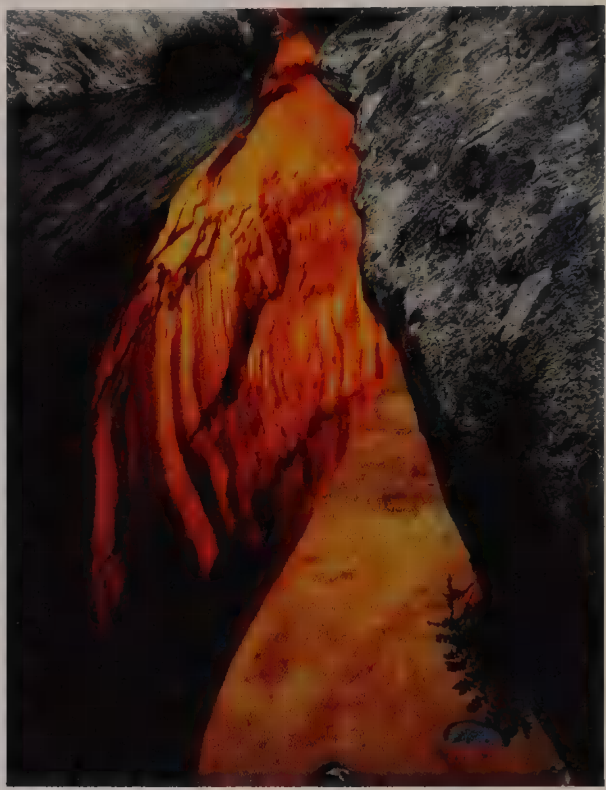
John Sabraw, *Kasumi-ki*, 2012, oil on aluminum composite panel, 24" x 24". McCormick.

Eliot Porter

Scheinbaum & Russek LTD
Santa Fe

A pioneer in color photography whose talent was recognized early by Ansel Adams and Alfred Stieglitz, the late Eliot Porter enjoyed a long and successful career. He is perhaps most celebrated for popularizing the dye-transfer process, and for a hugely successful book, *In Wildness Is the Preservation of the World*, which was published by the Sierra Club in 1962.

This small but smart selection of his photographs from the 1930s to the early '60s gave a succinct overview of his abilities and interests, beginning with a spooky and austere portrait of Georgia O'Keeffe that suggested how his work might have developed if he had pursued portraiture. Porter was a keen observer of birds, and there are two stunning bird shots here—one of goldfinches in black and white, and another of a jewel-toned purple gallinule about to take flight.



Eliot Porter, *Hidden Passage*, 1961, dye transfer print, 17½" x 14". Scheinbaum & Russek LTD.

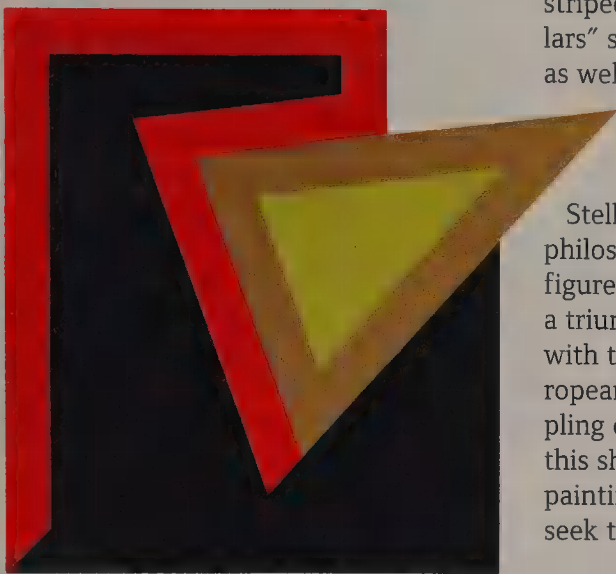
The artist's images of trees have often seemed to flirt dangerously with sentimentality, but a close look at works like *Yellow Aspens, September* (1951) or *Maple and Beeches, N.H.* (1957) reveals surprising subtleties of color and line that Porter brought to his woodsy subjects, evidence of a sensibility almost Japanese in its simplicity. Some wonderful close-ups of rocks and lichen showed Porter's eye for nature's quirky abstractions, but the real tours de force were works like *Hidden Passage* and *Hidden Passage, Glen Canyon, Utah* (both 1961), where topsy-turvy visions of water, rocks, and reflections leave the viewer pleasurably off balance.

With all the innovations and photographic experimentation of the last 20 years, Porter's work may seem a bit old-fashioned, or even stuffy. But what comes through loud and clear is his intelligent passion for the wild places he so dearly loved—and that, surely, never goes out of style. ***—Ann Landi***

Frank Stella

Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg
Wolfsburg, Germany

This daring, revelatory retrospective, uniting 63 large-format works and 82 drawings and sketches made by Frank Stella between 1958 and 2012, sought to revise the artist's place in the art-history books. The immediate simplicity of Stella's well-known "Black Paintings," such as *Morro Castle* (1958), still arrests and shocks, even after so many years. But rather than presenting him as a pioneer of Minimalism, the show postulated that he was in fact an inveterate Maximalist whose work embodied the human impulse to adorn.



Frank Stella, *Tuftonboro I*, 1966, synthetic polymer paint and graphite on canvas, 100½" x 109". Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg.

The gorgeous 1969–70 painting *Damascus Gate, Variation I* sprawled across 40 feet of wall space. Inverted red arcs intersected with gray and blue ones; orange, green, and black semicircles filled in the center; and all the curving lines seemed to lead to another line, even when they actually didn't—which added to the piece's disorienting fascination.

Stella's move toward the three-dimensional was represented here by wall-mounted curved canvases from the 1970s and '80s, some of which rather unfortunately reflected the excessive esthetic of their time. The "birds" of the '70s, for example, with their unappealing shades of brown and purple painted on clef note–shaped forms, evoke ads for a suburban jazz café. But these works soon gave way to the glorious striped cylinders of the "Cones and Pillars" series, dating from 1984 to 1987, as well as the controlled crushed-aluminum and steel reliefs of recent years.

Despite the esoteric nature of Stella's titles, which often refer to philosophers, composers, and literary figures, the show presented his works as a triumph of ornament above all. As with the filigrees and arabesques of European Renaissance drawings—a sampling of which were exhibited alongside this show—Stella's works invigorate painting by compelling the viewer to seek the powerful underlying pattern.

—Carly Berwick

Paula Rego

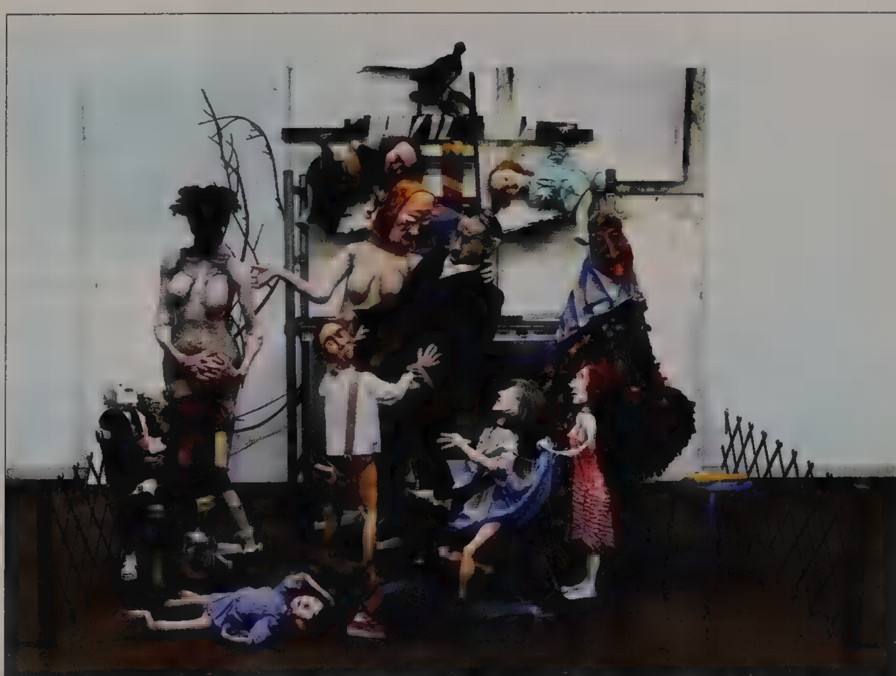
Marlborough
London

At the entrance to this small, splendid exhibition, visitors were greeted by a gaggle of life-size dolls with gaping mouths, vacant stares, and assorted props, from a stuffed pheasant to a toy machine gun. Playful and slightly creepy, this tableau, *Maquette for The Playground* (2012), set the stage for the pastels-on-paper that followed it, demonstrating London-based Portuguese artist Paula Rego's singular talent for evoking narrative action in both two and three dimensions.

Rego may not be the fussiest of drawers, but she is brilliant at creating scenes of dramatic power that avoid the stagy or contrived. About half the works in this show, "Dame with the goat's foot and other stories," were inspired by a 19th-century romance novel by Portuguese writer Alexandre Herculano. In them, a diva with cloven feet lords over children and animals while a smartly dressed, graying man—Rego's partner, according to the gallery—sits nearby, sometimes looking dazed by the frenzy. Combining mythic monumentality with great warmth and humanity, these works also seem to plumb the latent darkness in Herculano's tale, interpreting the story as a metaphor for the patriarchal oppression of women in traditional society.

Even when depicting more prosaic scenes, such as a glum-looking couple sharing a bottle of wine in *At the Table* (2012), the artist works in a pantomime language of masks, marionettes, and clowns—recalling Picasso's saltimbanques but with a darker, more perverse hue. In *Flayed* (2012), a white-robed Pierrot strips the skin off a bloodied, prostrate woman, and in *The Last Feed* (2012), a man kisses the breast of a figure who looks identical to one of the mannequins in the sculptural maquette. Thus theater and life, the uncanny and the realistic, and dolls and people coinhabit Rego's magical world.

—Roger Atwood

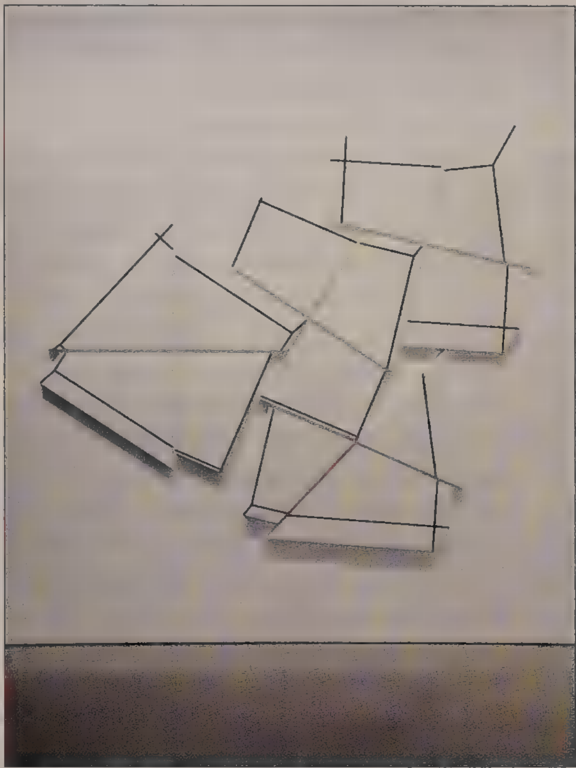


Paula Rego, *Maquette for The Playground*, 2012, mixed media, dimensions variable. Marlborough.

Manfred Mohr

Carroll/Fletcher
London

If you didn't know that New York–based German artist Manfred Mohr works almost exclusively with computers, you could probably guess it from his perfectly angular geometric designs. In this survey of his half-century career, "one and zero," there was barely a brushstroke, jagged edge, or gestural



Manfred Mohr, *P-306/350D*, 1984-94, acrylic on canvas, 86⅝" x 98¼". Carroll/Fletcher.

element of any kind. Yet Mohr's technique is clearly a lot more complex than simply clicking and dragging.

Born in 1938, the artist was one of the first to use algorithms and technology to make abstract works, and his chilly, hybrid process combines conceptual art and computer science to yield pieces of surprising beauty and subtlety. In *P-709-B5* (2002), a series of colored triangular planes formally recalls Russian Constructivism, minus the political content. A number of videos in which computer-generated shapes slowly but constantly shift form in graceful progression may be more graphic design than art, but they are lovely to watch.

Mohr displayed a more tactile approach with a group of lacquered-steel wall sculptures. They have a cool pliability; in *P522d* (1997), for example, black and metallic-silver lines merge with shadows to create a muscular yet fragile interplay of light and dark, materiality and ethereality.

The show also included a large selection of work from Mohr's pioneering 1971 exhibition at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, which presented a suite of drawings made by computer plotters. These were the first computer-generated works most people had ever seen, and they have lost none of their strange, delicate power. Some suggest telex strips or electronic circuit boards, while others evoke long rows of script or punctuation marks, as if Mohr were devising some new dialect. In a way, he was—and this show demonstrated that this extraordinarily inventive artist is still developing the language of digital art.

—Roger Atwood

Marjane Satrapi

Galerie Jérôme de Noirmont
Paris

Paris-based Iranian artist Marjane Satrapi is best known for her black-and-white graphic novel *Persepolis* (2000), which tells the powerful story of a young girl's coming of age in a war-torn Iran and was made into an animated film in 2007. This exhibition revealed yet another of the artist's talents—painting—displayed here for the first time. Bold, colorful, and stylized, the 21 untitled portraits of women were all made between 2009 and 2012, and their subjects appear quite similar to the characters in the artist's comic strips.

Exhibited downstairs, Satrapi's elegant large-format canvases depicted dark-eyed, dark-haired women arranged into tonal groupings, in palettes of ruby red, Persian blue, and saffron yellow. In their vibrant majesty, the paintings might be contemporary female-focused counterparts to royal portraits of Qajar princes. In the upstairs gallery, Satrapi presented jewellike compositions that each featured a single woman. Dreamy, mysterious, and aloof, the women glance to the side, their mouths closed, as if lost in thought. The artist has written in press material that the figures are inspired by people from her childhood in Tehran, yet her depictions lack the intimate, personal quality of portraits. Instead, they are untitled, idealized, and anonymous, and seem to take on an archetypal dimension.

Marjane Satrapi, *Untitled*, 2012, acrylic on paper mounted on canvas, 25" x 19⅛". Galerie Jérôme de Noirmont.

©MARJANE SATRAPI/COURTESY GALERIE JÉRÔME DE NOIRMONT, PARIS

Satrapi's luminous canvases draw on motifs from both Eastern and Western cultures. They evoke the compositional complexity, lushness, and vibrancy of Persian miniatures but also reflect the influence of the artist's modern European heroes: Balthus, in their naive, fairy-tale quality; Mondrian, in their striking geometric compositions; and Matisse, in their flat areas of vivid color. At their best moments, her portraits are not simply pleasing to the eye but are suffused with a gentle light that seems to glow from within.

—Laurie Hurwitz

McDermott & McGough

Galerie Andrea Caratsch
Zurich

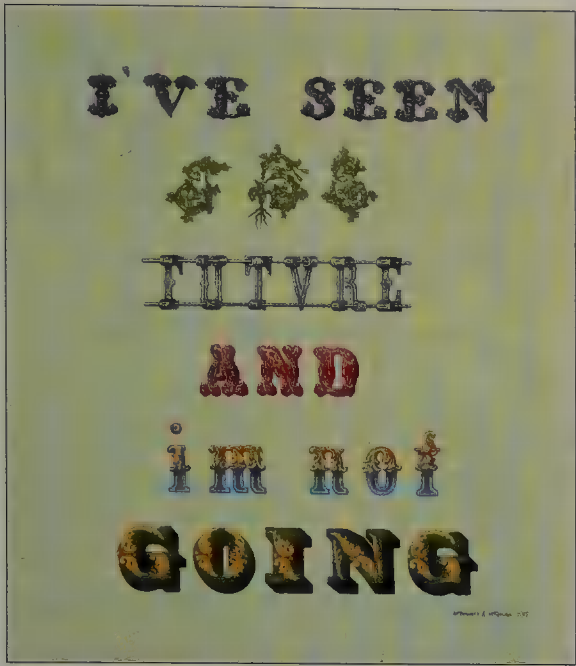
This overview of the multifaceted oeuvre of artist duo David McDermott and Peter McGough, which united 25 works produced between 1989 and 2006, illuminated their continued engagement with the past in both subject matter and technique. This "then and now" dichotomy was neatly embodied in the 2005 oil on linen *I've seen the future and I'm not going, 1939*, an orderly mêlange of highly decorative fonts that spell out the work's title in something like a pictorial manifesto.

The photographs, oil paintings, and single sculpture in the show were all "backdated"—often with years that wryly referred to the work's medium or the historical origin of its subject. *Super hero dreamer no. 2, 1945* (2002), backdated 1945, depicts a man straight from the '40s, ironing his pants while dreaming of some of the period's male heroes, such as Superman and Batman. The duo's 1994 photographs of French architectural or sculptural icons were backdated 1865, and they all employed the

salt-print method of photographic reproduction commonly used in the mid-19th century.

The large- and smaller-format paintings that comprised the most dramatic part of this excellent exhibition often borrowed motifs from 20th-century genres, such as comic books, science fiction, and slick advertisements, portrayed in the exuberant spirit of Pop art. *Bedtime stories (So long suckers!), 1958* (2006), for example, included an automobile mash-up and a fanciful spaceship among its many visuals. But the show's centerpiece was *The cross, 1936* (1990), an eight-foot-long oil on canvas in the shape of a cross, on which the duo copied 15 iconic artworks—by the likes of Botticelli, Vermeer, and Manet—from eight centuries of art history. Dated and meticulously painted, the mini reproductions were arranged, as if chronologically, side by side—the ultimate anachronism for a pair of artists who have made anachronism central to their art.

—Mary Krienke



David McDermott & Peter McGough, *I've seen the future and I'm not going, 1939*, 2005, oil on linen, 48" x 41". Galerie Andrea Caratsch.

UP NOW

Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art 7 (APT7)

Queensland Art Gallery and Gallery of Modern Art
Brisbane, Australia
Through April 14

The seventh edition of the Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art (APT), currently celebrating its 20th anniversary, showcases the powerful work being made by 75 artists based in 27 countries, ranging from Turkey to the Pacific Islands. Much of the art commissioned will join the two-venue museum's collection, now one of the best holdings of contemporary Asian art in the world. The works encompass traditional craft and digital media, and many contributions explore global issues that are particularly relevant to the Asia Pacific, such as sustainability and cultural preservation.

Standout works include a 2012 video installation by the young Indonesian art collective Tromarama titled *EVERYONE IS EVERYBODY*, which mixes consumerism with local politics in a cartoon mash-up of singing handbags mouthing subversive ideologies. Indonesian-Australian artist Tintin Wulia's 2012 installation *Eeny Meeny Money Moe* features four carnival machines that allow visitors to manipulate a mechanical claw and, if successful, win one of the many international passports that fill the insides. Though her take is playful, it is also serious, cynically suggesting that the stakes of national identity and citizenship are often subject to the arbitrary anarchy of bureaucracy, and even chance.

Other artists have a more environmental message to communicate, such as Vietnamese artist Nguyen Manh Hung, whose sculptural tower made from blocks of recycled materials is shown against an idyllic projection of blue skies—optimistically suggesting a return to simpler ways of life. And Japanese artist Tadasu Takamine's narrative installation *Kagoshima Esperanto* (2012), created in the wake of disasters in both Queensland and Japan, immerses the spectator in a theatrical space with music, lighting, and text that seek to commemorate the experience of loss.

Since the founding of APT in 1993, every edition has included the installation of a major work above the Queensland Art Gallery's massive interior water mall. This time, Paris-based Chinese artist Huang Yong Ping has sculpted *Ressort* (2012)—a polished-steel snake skeleton that rises and twists upward to the ceiling as if symbolically linking sky and water.

In the neighboring Gallery of Modern Art—which hosts the triennial in conjunction with the Queensland Art Gallery—a large central space juxtaposes a number of carved structures and performance masks from Papua New Guinea with a new suite of paintings by New Zealand artist Graham Fletcher. The traditional crafts are echoed in the canvases of Fletcher's "Lounge Room Tribalism" series, where painted renditions of Pacific Islander masks and artifacts are placed in acid-colored 1960s apartment interiors. Taken all together, the installation blends the region's artisanal history with a modernist esthetic. It offers a compelling meditation on the politics of cultural preservation that is a common thread throughout the works in the triennial.

—Peter Hill

Huang Yong Ping, *Ressort*, 2012, aluminum and stainless steel, 32' ¾" x 59'; 174' linear length. Queensland Art Gallery.

Exhibition / Competition

Agora Gallery. Established in 1984, Agora Gallery located in the heart of New York City's Chelsea art district is currently accepting new submissions for the 2011/2012 Exhibition Season. Open to emerging as well as established artists worldwide, 18 years of age or older. Check out work by currently featured artists on http://www.art-mine.com. The Gallery Director reviews submissions on an ongoing basis. For more information about gallery representation visit: http://www.agora-gallery.com/representation or email: Marie@agora-gallery.com.

Elisabeth Sussman, noted curator at the Whitney Museum of American Art in NYC, winner of 2013 Award for Curatorial Excellence & the co-curator of the 2012 Whitney Biennial will be the juror for Viridian Artists 24th International Juried Competition. Open to all US and international artists working in 2D and 3D media. Cash prizes, Power-Point presentation, Group exhibition July 2-20, 2013. Entry deadline: April 20, 2013. $40/3 works, $5 each additional. For more information and to enter: www.viridianartists.com/submission. Viridian Artists, Inc. , 548 West 28th St., #632, NY, NY 10001

National Art Competition: East End Arts, Long Island NY. Theme: H2O. Two-dimensional art only. Jurors: Bruce Helander - renowned critic, internationally-known artist and author; White House Fellow, NEA. Peter Marcelle - Director, Gerald Peters Gallery, NYC; Owner, Peter Marcelle Gallery, Bridgehampton. Awards: 10-day stay in EEA Artist-Residence, near Hamptons' Museums & Galleries; $1,000 cash; inclusion in Peter Marcelle Gallery group show. Entry: $45 up to 5 JPEGs. Online Submissions Only. Entry Deadline: April 17, 2013. Prospectus www.eastendarts.org.

GARGIULO ART FOUNDATION, INC. presents Bicycle Theme Art Show, July 13 at Hollingsworth Art Gallery and Flagler County Art League Gallery, Inc., City Market Place, Palm Coast, FL. In conjunction with City of Palm Coast's 5th annual bicycle "Tour de Palm Coast". Juror J. J. Graham, Artist/Gallery Owner; Awards, - Four person show/purchases; $35/6 images; all media; deadline June 9; acceptance notification, June 22. Prospectus: SASE to GAF, 8 Cedar Point Drive, Palm Coast, FL 32164. Phone (386) 446-0617; www.hollingsworthgallery.com

NEW YORK, NY: Catharine Lorillard Wolfe Art Club, Inc. 117th Annual Open Juried Exhibition at the National Arts Club, NY. October 1 - 25, 2013. Open to women artists. Media: Oil, Acrylic, Watercolor, Pastel, Graphics, and Sculpture. Over $10,000 in awards. Entry Fee: $35/Members and Associates, $40/Non-Members. Online entry deadline is July 8, 2013. Submit your entries at www.onlinejuriedshows.com. For prospectus, send SASE to Okki Whang, 431 Woodbury Road, Cold Spring Harbor, NY 11724 or download prospectus at www.clwac.org.

Call for entries: International Guild of Realism (IGOR) 8th Annual Juried Exhibition. IGOR has secured a top ranking art museum and gallery in Arizona to host our 8th Annual Juried Realist Exhibition, which will be held in October and November of this year. All entrants must be Guild Members in good standing at the time of the judging as well as during the exhibition. The juried membership of IGOR features the world's leading realism artists from over 35 countries offering a wide spectrum of realist art. Still accepting memberships. Call for entries ends May 20th, 2013. For more information about joining IGOR as a juried member, please go to IGOR's website at: www.realismguild.com.

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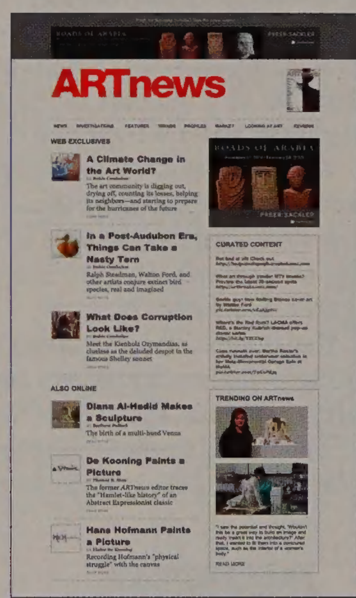

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CRITIC'S PICK SIONA BENJAMIN

***Eddna Samuel (Akshikar) from the Bene Israel Jewish community, Mumbai, India*, 2012, photocollage and gouache on paper.**

'I like to recycle mythology—I like being a storyteller," says Siona Benjamin. Raised in a Jewish household in Mumbai, Benjamin mixes Indian folk imagery with religious iconography to create artworks that are multilayered, thought-provoking, and rich in narrative content. Her knack for storytelling has a lot to do with her background in theater—in addition to a diploma in enameling and an M.F.A. in painting, drawing, and metals from Southern Illinois University, Benjamin has a second M.F.A. in theater-set design and has conceived the scenery for numerous productions.

Also inspired by illuminated manuscripts and Persian and Indian miniature paintings, Benjamin, 52, considers precision and size to be key aspects of her work. She uses very thin brushes and gouache paint to create fine details. "I can draw the viewer into a web of beauty," she says of her paintings and collages, "then make them think about the story." And the story at the center of many of Benjamin's pieces is feminine identity—how mythology, heritage, and religion can empower women.

Her studio is located in the basement of her home in Montclair, New Jersey, where she lives with her husband—a geology professor at Montclair State University—and their 17-year-old daughter. There, Benjamin keeps her vast library of Indian and Jewish folklore, as well as Indian calendars and comic books, which she incorporates into her work. For many of her pieces, the artist combines pop-culture images with likenesses of powerful goddesses such as Lilith, Miriam, and Kali, in order to modernize ancient tales and highlight their relevance in contemporary culture. Benjamin is represented in New York by Flomenhaft Gallery, where her prices range from $1,000 for a small piece to $20,000 for larger works.

Siona Benjamin.

The artist recently finished a series of collages for her upcoming show "Faces: Weaving Indian Jewish Narratives," opening this month at the Museum Mumbai and traveling to the Goodman Family Judaic & Archival Museum at Temple Israel in West Bloomfield, Michigan, next fall. These works are the culmination of research she undertook on a Fulbright Fellowship a couple of years ago. For the project, Benjamin went to India, where she interviewed and photographed more than 60 local Jewish men and women. She turned their portraits into photocollages and added layers of Indian calendar pictures and painted details, connecting personal histories with commercial imagery. "I hope in my Fulbright work to discuss how very diverse we all are," she says. "I am weaving narratives that are uniquely theirs, but also so universal to us all." ***—Stephanie Strasnick***

Stephanie Strasnick is editorial assistant of ARTnews.